

Cowles Library Strategic Plan 2021

(May 2021)

Purpose*:

In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. [From the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, emphasis added.]

Cowles Library faculty and staff hold the responsibility to preserve and share information for free, self-governing people as a precious trust. We believe a library is properly understood as a *program*, not primarily a building or the information resources available in and through it. Cowles Library's program transforms lives and strengthens communities in a democratic society by equipping students, faculty, and staff with quality information and teaching them to find, evaluate, and use it. In this way, the library prepares students for meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishments, and responsible global citizenship. This is our contribution to the Drake University mission. The library's program fosters learning and research and is created and enacted through the essential ingredient of a 21st century library: the expertise of its faculty and staff.

Mission†:

Cowles Library transforms lives and strengthens communities in a democratic society by equipping students, faculty, and staff with quality information and teaching them to find it adeptly, evaluate it critically, and employ it ethically.

Vision‡:

Cowles Library envisions a future where:

- The library is recognized as the intellectual "heart of the university."
- Scholarly information is freely and easily available, with no roadblocks to access. The scholarly information system serves researchers and students, not for-profit corporations.
- The electronic and digital collections continue to expand to meet our users' curricular and research needs, while the physical collection is honed to focus on materials not available electronically, those of specific importance to the University, and the portion of the human record Drake holds as part of the collective collection.

Vivid Description of a Desired Future:

Cowles Library is recognized as the intellectual heart of the university; the education and resources it provides circulate through Drake University, bringing intellectual oxygen to every part of the institution. The library's educational program is well articulated internally and well understood throughout the university. Its goal of educating information-literate lifelong learners, able continually to refresh their education, is endorsed at the highest levels. All instruction (credit-bearing courses, information literacy

* Definition: A purpose statement expresses the impact the organization is trying to have on the people it serves.

† Definition: A mission statement defines what business the organization is in.

‡ Definition: A vision statement describes what the organization wishes to be like in some years' time.

sessions, embedded relationships, primary source education, badges and microcredentials, workplace information literacy certifications) is coordinated and works together toward outcomes that are embraced institution-wide. The instructional program is based upon the best thinking and practices in the library profession, the 2016 Framework and its successors. Every undergraduate has had at least one experience learning from primary sources, whether using the Drake archives or primary source collections available virtually. Drake students see value in the program, with a majority of senior survey respondents remarking positively on their unique encounter with primary sources. Alumni surveys consistently reveal that information literacy is one of the most valued and utilized parts of the Drake education five and ten years post-graduation. Former students also comment on the care and support they received from the library on the co-curricular side. Coming from high school, they didn't realize how helpful librarians could be, but they quickly came to value their librarian's guidance. The library's work as part of the university academic success network has not gone unnoticed. Alumni demonstrate their information literacy skills by being informed citizens who resist propaganda and seek out reliable information on questions of the day. Other people can't help but notice these rare qualities, and Drake graduates become leaders in their communities. They so value their Drake library experiences that they become public library users and supporters.

The unique resources of the archives and special collections are the highlights of the library's collection, shaping the institution's reputation as they do in all academic libraries. Drake is the place for the papers of any politician with an Iowa connection. Collaborations with other area archives have led to mutually beneficial joint activities, such as curating and digitizing the Des Moines Register photo archives held by Grand View University. Digitizing and sharing these resources with the world remains a high priority. General collection tangible resources are part of the national collective collection: Drake is a node through CI-CCI and the Midwest Collective. Cowles' tangible collection consists of two parts: 1) the small, lean, frequently circulating core collection and 2) the collection it houses on behalf of the regional and national collective. While these materials don't move around the system frequently, the scholarly community benefits from their conservation, and they find their rightful place by staying in the libraries that "borrow" them. The bulk of the library's "collection" is the access that it facilitates to the great scholarly collective, vigilantly working with other libraries to ensure open access to information created by and for the scholarly community. A rigorous process of self-publishing with post-publication peer review for long-form and short-form scholarship has rendered commercial publishers and even university presses obsolete. Scholars have a clear pathway to sharing whatever they create, and lively peer critique ensures that knowledge is self-correcting. The network of institutional and disciplinary repositories makes scholars' output available and accessible worldwide; the days of information "haves" and "have-nots" are over for global citizens with internet access. Advances in computing, coupled with the extraordinary collaboration of the library community, have consolidated discovery into one central index, managed by a cooperative. Librarians did not mourn the demise of database vendors.

As the university's information provider, the library naturally absorbed provision of course materials, freeing the university store to focus on more lucrative sales of university-branded merchandise. The changes in scholarly communication detailed above, plus library-led faculty education around open and affordable educational resources (OER and AER), have brought students' textbook costs down close to zero and opened new course material options for faculty to choose.

Cowles Library's dedication to being the preferred information resource for all Drake-affiliated people is further exemplified by its lively special-library information consultation service for administrators and staff, who appreciate the quick, thorough answers they get to work-related questions. The library also serves the Drake Neighborhood with targeted programs through campus partnerships like the Boys and

Girls Club and the Ray Society. These initiatives are part of the library’s dedication to real impact, not symbolic gestures.

With the library “heart” pumping so much oxygen through the university community, it’s no wonder that Cowles faculty and staff have become leaders in the library profession, their expertise sought by colleagues and their involvement invited by professional organizations. Drake University appreciates how the library’s renown enriches its own reputation and, in turn, takes care to ensure that the “heart” gets the resources it needs to continue pumping.

Ideals, Principles, and Values:

Cowles Library’s Foundational Principles

Cowles Library’s practice proceeds from two principles—rights and responsibilities—enacted in two values: intellectual freedom and information literacy. These principles and values are fully consonant with university and librarianship philosophy and core values statements. Information is central to education, and the library is a core provider of information and the university leader in the teaching of information literacy. Intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information are essential to the development of responsible citizens in a democracy. Therefore, the library does not filter or hinder access to information. Library users have the right to seek information on any topic or viewpoint they wish. At the same time, responsible citizenship demands critical evaluation of information, so library users have the responsibility to become information literate and use their skills whenever they seek or find information. Rights and responsibilities also apply to the use of information. Library users have the right to express themselves. At the same time, library users have the responsibility to ensure that their expression is informed and to consider the impact of their expression on other people.

Cowles Library Values

Cowles Library’s values stem from the American Library Association and Drake University core values. Further explication of the library’s values can be found in the long version of the strategic plan.

Strategic Priorities

(Note: the lead department and starting year are in parentheses after each initiative. Some initiatives will take multiple years to complete or will remain ongoing work.)

- **Priority A: Recreate scholarly communication, increasing university awareness of the unsustainability of the current system and promoting openness.**
 - Initiative 1: Better utilize our institutional repository in order to share Drake-created scholarship with the world. (SCCD, 2021)
 - Initiative 2: Raise faculty awareness of Open Access and reduce misconceptions about Open Access and impact factors. (SCCD, 2021)
- **Priority B: Reconceptualize library collections and the relationships of parts to the whole: rare and unique resources, licensed resources, the collective collection, and the tangible resources residing in Cowles Library.**
 - Initiative 1: Through CI-CCL, ally local collection development work to regional and national shared preservation initiatives. (SCCD, 2023)

- Initiative 2: Develop a plan for targeted acquisition and digitization of primary source material. (A/SC, T&L, SCCD, Access Services, 2022)
 - Initiative 3: Grow the Political Papers Collection through outreach to congressional delegation after elections. (A/SC, 2022)
 - Initiative 4: With several relevant partners, establish a Digital Public Library of America service hub for Iowa and, perhaps, surrounding unserved states. (Dean, 2021)
- **Priority C: Critically examine--through lenses of diversity, equity, and inclusion--and improve library practices and collections.**
 - Initiative 1: Partner with Boys & Girls Club to develop those students' information literacy skills. (T&L, 2023)
 - Initiative 2: Pilot a diversity audit of a subsection of the library's physical book collection (e.g., purchased in the last 1-2 years) to determine the feasibility of applying audit criteria to the entire physical collection and any future purchases. (SCCD, 2022)
 - Initiative 3: Celebrate the diverse scholars identified after a campus-wide call for nominations. (DEI WG, 2021)
 - Initiative 4: Perform a needs analysis of the information and information literacy needs of the Drake Neighborhood, possibly in partnership with Des Moines Public Library. (DEI WG, 2022)
- **Priority D: Ally vigorous library initiatives with other campus work in fostering student success.**
 - Initiative 1: Lead university developments in open and affordable educational resources. (SCCD, 2021)
 - Initiative 2: Develop a Personal Librarian pilot program that pairs students from identified groups (e.g., GEAR UP, first-generation) with Cowles Librarians. If successful, expand the program to include more students. (T&L, 2021)
- **Priority E: Reenvision information literacy instruction at Drake, considering outcomes, modalities, and teacher development.**
 - Initiative 1: Fully coordinate the instruction program, aligning goals and outcomes and articulating sequencing. (T&L, 2022)
 - Initiative 2: Develop outcomes and a vision for teaching primary source research beyond disciplinary boundaries. (A/SC, T&L, 2023)
- **Priority F: Partner closely with the Digital Proficiency Platform initiative.**
 - Initiative 1: Develop and market a workplace information literacy competency certification program through the Digital Proficiency Initiative. (Digital Proficiency Librarian, 2024)
 - Initiative 2: Develop badging and certificate opportunities for students, as additional pathways toward information literacy. (Digital Proficiency Librarian, 2024)
 - Initiative 3: Create one or more "digitally rich learning environments." (Dean, 2024)
- **Priority G: Ground library practices in thorough understanding of library users' experiences and perceptions.**
 - Initiative 1: Articulate a robust plan for assessment of student information literacy learning. (T&L, 2022)
 - Initiative 2: Study user experience (UX) of website, building, and services, and use knowledge gained to improve functionality, enhance enjoyment, and increase students' sense of belonging. (AL AUX WG, 2021)
- **Priority H: Apply technological solutions to library challenges.**

- Initiative 1: Refresh library website to ensure currency and accuracy of content, conform to university design and branding standards, and incorporate learning from user experience research. (SCCD lead but library-wide initiative, 2021)
- Initiative 2: Work with the Alliance to explore long-term, game-changing solutions to the problem of rampant inflation in database prices, with the goal of self-sufficiency for the library community. (Dean, 2023)
- Initiative 3: Continue to strengthen the ability to deliver services and teach remotely, securely, and accessibly. (SCCD, 2021)
- Initiative 4: Migrate to a new archival management system (potentially ArchivesSpace). (A/SC, SCCD, 2023)
- Initiative 5: Collaborate with ITS to establish standards for the long-term stability of digital records. (A/SC, SCCD, 2023)
- **Priority I: Make functional and aesthetic improvements to Cowles Library.**
 - Initiative 1: Construct an at-grade entrance on the east end for accessibility (Dean, 2025)
 - Initiative 2: Create a conducive space for the Academic Access and Success Center, centralizing academic support in Cowles to bring together the teaching and coaching offered by both the library and AASC personnel. (Dean, 2025)
 - Initiative 3: Work on the tiers to create useable, pleasant space. (Dean, 2025)
 - Initiative 4: Do a facelift on the lower level and second floor. (Dean, 2025)
- **Priority J: Augment the library budget through fundraising:**
 - Initiative 1: Generate sustainable funding for archives: personnel, supplies, displays, and digitization. (Dean, A/SC, 2021)
 - Initiative 2: Generate sustainable funding for information resources by getting gifts to purchase desired digital collections and by creating endowments for targeted continuations. (Dean, SCCD, T&L, 2023)
 - Initiative 3: With University Advancement, generate gifts to enable desired improvements to the library building. (Dean, 2024)

Table of Start Dates

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
A1	B2	B1	F1	I1
A2	B3	C1	F2	I2
B4	C2	D4	F3	I3
C3	C4	E2	J3	I4
D1	D3	H2		
D2	E1	H4		
G2	G1	H5		
H1		J2		
H3				
J1				