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Introduction

Vancouver Island University (VIU) Library is known as a leader in its class for consistently identifying, leveraging, and advancing strategic regional, national, and international collaborations, from which many benefits accrue. The library continues to transform, along with VIU, in response to the communities we serve. We are proud of our reputation and committed to continual improvement.

As VIU continues to offer increasingly diverse yet specialized programs, to engage with and serve our region, and to build and expand reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities and partners, the challenges and opportunities for VIU Library mount. At once a centre and a networked hub, we provide critical resources, services, and expertise that support VIU in advancing its goals.

This plan lays out our strategic objectives. These will guide VIU Library’s activities over the next several years, within the context of the VIU Academic Plan.

Our environment

VIU Library’s current landscape is complex and dynamic. It is characterized by:

- shifting and frequently contradictory user community expectations (i.e., quiet study space vs group collaboration, electronic vs print preferences);
- demographically and geographically diverse users;
- financial challenges in meeting the teaching, resource, and research needs of a programmatically diverse and increasingly complex institution;
- the continuing evolution of scholarly communications;
- evolving and competing space demands;
- the operational challenges of high-use public facilities in a regional campus model;
- a need for expanded strategic access to regional and national network infrastructure and services to enable discovery and preservation;
- increasingly sophisticated work owing to technological advancement and evolving information science approaches;
- the ongoing need for the development of information and digital literacies in the VIU community, and;
aspirations in the library, at the University, and in peer library networks to undertake meaningful Indigenization work, responding to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), responsibilities according to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and guided by relationships with local Indigenous communities.

VIU’s program diversity, student community, and multi campus library service model are unique. Within our BC comparator cohort (British Columbia Institute of Technology, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Thompson Rivers University, and University of the Fraser Valley), the library is doing more with less: we rank second for the ratio of FTE students to library staff and third for the ratio of collection budget to FTE students. Within our cohort at the Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) and Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), we compare in the lower third across similar ratios. However, in multiple surveys, students highly rank both the importance of, and their satisfaction with, VIU Library as a location conducive to study, collaboration, and research. In other surveys, faculty rate the library less positively, a trend consistent across Canada.

VIU’s faculty scores were more positive than those of most institutions during a time of rapid change characterized by the diminished role of traditional library access tools: for example, the replacement of well-known indexes and print journals with discovery tools and databases of content is increasing, and larger numbers and varieties of e-resources in collections are suddenly much more apparent in virtual rather than physical space.

Results from regular surveys of the VIU community point to the significant role the library plays as an academic support and service provider, not least its dedicated study and collaboration spaces which are among the most frequently accessed and helpful resources on campus for students. In this and other contexts, the library can additionally be seen as a recruitment resource for VIU.

Over the past 15 years, research has established a strong correlation between library use and academic success: The University of Wollongong in Australia was one of the first institutions to
show a link between students’ grades and use of library information sources\(^1\). The positive correlation between library use and grades has been repeatedly replicated by other researchers\(^2\), including two of the leading assessment programs in academic librarianship: Joint Information Systems Committee’s (JISC) Library Impact Data Project\(^3\), and Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) Assessment in Action program\(^4\). With a convincing positive correlation established between library use and student academic success, researchers have turned their attention to more specific ways that students and libraries are linked beyond grades:

- Haddow demonstrated that students who persist at an institution used library resources at a much higher proportion than did students who withdrew\(^5\).
- Emmons and Wilkinson found a statistically significant positive relationship between the ratio of library professional staff to students, and retention and graduation rates\(^6\).
- Multiple projects from ACRL’s Assessment in Action program showed the importance of library instruction in building student confidence with the research process, contributing to student retention, particularly in first year\(^7\), and correlating to higher grades and better information literacy competencies\(^8\).
- Both research at VIU and contextualizing literature, including projects from ACRL’s Assessment in Action program, conclusively demonstrate that a library’s research and

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study space foster the social and academic community among students\textsuperscript{9} that are important factors in retention and success.

Where have we come from?

Over the past two decades, the library has demonstrated a consistent willingness to reimagine library work and adapt to changing realities. In transforming from a small, print-based community college library to a full-service university library, we have:

- evolved library technology, outreach, assessment, and staff roles;
- shifted collection development approaches to establish significant, sustainable breadth, and depth, able to support new courses and programs;
- led or contributed to numerous regional and national innovative initiatives to improve library practices and ultimately our own services;
- conducted a thorough review of our fines and loans practices, resulting in the removal of overdue fines, increased loan periods, and the reduction of other policy barriers;
- designed and implemented student-centred spaces, including silent study halls, technology-enabled group study rooms, and 24/7 Learning Commons;
- forged relationships with institutional partners, including the Centre for Innovation and Excellence in Learning (CIEL), the Writing Centre, Student Affairs, International Education, and Information Technology Services, to foster coordinated and co-located services for students;
- embarked on several community outreach and Indigenous education initiatives;
- attracted significant donations in support of our Special Collections;
- launched a joint institutional repository with Royal Roads University.

VIU’s Nanaimo library sees consistently high numbers of visitors during academic terms, and usage of our electronic resources continues to increase. The library is an active and proactive university partner. Professional librarians (MLIS), para-professionals (LibTech) and experienced, service-oriented front-line staff participate in various committees and task groups, both internal and external to VIU, and engage in continuous education and scholarly activity. We work

\textsuperscript{9} Brown & Malenfant.(2017).
reflectively to understand the needs of our diverse users and to shape roles and services to respond to those needs.

Where are we going and how will we get there?

The library is critical for the VIU community and its resilience, particularly in times of rapid change. Through contributions to, and examination of, progressive pedagogy, the development of responsive, socially progressive, and practical policy and practices, and proactive, specialized management and instruction, VIU Library will continue to actively seek new opportunities and contend with new challenges.

We will continue to develop and transform by building on our strengths: participatory leadership, active supports for scholarship, academic rigour, collaborative practice, community engagement, and innovative and responsive service design. We will gauge our progress with evidence-informed assessment and intentional conversations with our partners and users, by accepting and reflecting on challenges to assumptions about our practices, and by responding and acting carefully in response.

Our commitment to student success and the digital learning experience will see our technology leadership – both on campus and beyond – grow even more demonstrably over the next several years. By attending to interoperability, and leveraging technological infrastructure advancements regionally, nationally, and internationally, all students and faculty will benefit from more robust access to library resources and services, regardless of their location in our region. We acknowledge that VIU Library staff offer skills and strengths from many places and backgrounds, and we are privileged to live and work in the traditional territories of Coast Salish peoples. We lead from where we are.

A key challenge that we have come to acknowledge and that we seek to better understand comes with respect to library relationships to Indigenous Knowledges: we are keen to develop and maintain relationships that will guide library practices, and where we are going will be shaped by these. We aim for the VIU Library to recognize Indigenous protocols towards Indigenous Knowledges and to accept the complexities related to Indigenous control of Indigenous Knowledges. Specifically, we are concerned with how best to integrate principles and values of Indigenous Knowledge systems into library practices and services, with a
particular focus on the principles and practices of a Coast Salish knowledge system situated in this territory. In our work with Indigenous Knowledge so far, a number of challenges to library assumptions have been posed by knowledge carriers. In order to meaningfully work through implications for practice, we will seek guidance thoughtfully and listen carefully to what is offered. This approach is necessary for critical engagement of Elders and communities, so that we are grounded in developing culturally responsive practice.

How will we know that we have been successful?

We will measure our success through evidence-based assessment, such as major surveys, analysis of circulation and collections data, outreach activities, and comparators to other institutions through the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and Council of Post-Secondary Libraries (CPSLD).
Plan Development

This plan was developed between Q2, 2017 and Q4, 2018, with direct or indirect input from many in the VIU community. We have incorporated the findings and recommendations of numerous reports, including the 2017 external review of the library.
VIU’s Academic Plan frames activities around six key objectives. While no specific actions from the Academic Plan were assigned to Library Administration, as a core academic service provider, the library has a central, facilitating role to play in supporting and advancing the plan. In considering VIU Library’s offerings in relation to the Academic Plan objectives, together with library-specific environmental threats and opportunities, we have identified five strategic objectives to guide our work over the next three to five years.
1. Welcoming and inclusive spaces

Primarily supports these Academic Plan objectives: Student learning, engagement and success; Academic community; Institutional effectiveness

VIU’s Nanaimo Library is a vibrant and welcoming learning environment on campus, visited more than 400,000 times a year by members of the VIU community. The renovated library space is 10 years old, and over the last decade, 5% of student space in the facility has been lost to offices. New space pressures and expectations surface frequently. Notably, VIU is expanding the depth and breadth of its offerings in the near future, and is embarking on a significant recruitment drive: we must manage middle and long term space needs against other priorities, acknowledging the vital link between the library and student success.

At all campus libraries, our service models are tightly integrated with our spaces; we can therefore anticipate changes to both our services and our spaces, as our community transforms, and as it transforms differently in each of the communities we serve. We must continue to anticipate and plan to meet evolving needs, leveraging and initiating inter-campus collaborations where feasible and practical.

Key actions:

- Preserve and improve student spaces in Nanaimo to meet peak demand while considering aligned “pop-up” opportunities during off-peak windows;
- Reimagine continuously, our Learning Commons configurations and partnerships to enhance student engagement, collaborative, formal, and informal learning;
- Explore the creation of family-friendly spaces;
- Continue to explore and implement ways to improve the library’s accessibility, security, and hospitality, to ensure that all VIU students feel safe and comfortable in our spaces;
- Acknowledging that language is both a medium for knowledge and a signifier for belonging, the VIU Library will look for ways to promote Indigenous language revitalization and use, particularly Coast Salish languages, in library online and physical spaces;
• Acknowledging the diversity of cultural knowledge reflected in VIU’s student body, the library will look for new ways to welcome and include international students;
• Shift to a single service desk model at the Nanaimo Campus Library;
• Engage with Learning Commons partners at each campus to enrich student experience through coordinated and collocated academic services;
• Provide institutional leadership in responsive and innovative academic computing services;
• Continuously review practice and procedure with a view to enhance engagement with traditionally underserved populations and international students;
• Support library staff through continuing service model transitions.

Resources:
Commons Plan; Library Space Framework; Information Literacy Plan; Collection Evolution; “Space study” – observations and interviews; “Stress buster” numbers; Student Service Fee assessments (study room usage, observations)

Assessment:
Biannual survey; supplemental surveys; liaison feedback; research help statistics; Degree English Requirements (DER) surveys/feedback; gate count; social media feedback; Integrated Library System metrics; observations.

2. Evolving resources and collections

Primarily supports these Academic Plan objectives: Student learning, engagement and success; Academic community; Institutional effectiveness; Program quality

As VIU’s academic offerings diversify, and as the publishing industry continues to consolidate, our active management of resources – and its complexity – will intensify. In response to community demand, VIU Library collection acquisitions have steadily transitioned from physical holdings to primarily electronic resources, accessible by all regional campuses and sites, and by students and faculty working and studying anywhere, anytime. Through the library, the VIU community now has access to the most diverse and plentiful context-specific information environment in its history.
Maintaining the collection at the level required by current academic offerings places an inexorable pressure on the VIU Library’s budget, exacerbated by inflation, exchange rates, and flux and consolidation in the scholarly publishing marketplace. These and other challenges are partially mitigated by our assessment practices, innovative acquisition models, and participation and leadership in provincial (BC Electronic Library Network – BCELN), regional (Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries – COPPUL) and national (Canadian Research Knowledge Network – CRKN) library consortia. Still, the challenges of the current scholarly publishing marketplace demand evolving mitigation tactics, and even a paradigm shift.

The notion of Indigenous Knowledge stewardship within an academic library counters traditional approaches to the management of libraries; there exist multiple value systems, domains of knowledges, reciprocal systems, and protocols of caring for, sharing, accessing, and protecting knowledges. We must acknowledge that libraries’ traditional approaches to collecting information, managing collections, and providing open access to information are not universal in meeting the needs of all cultural groups and peoples. This acknowledgement and the actions that flow from it are critical to decolonizing our practices with respect to collections and other library work, both in the context of Indigenous Knowledge and the international student population.

VIU Library is engaged in several Open Access initiatives that combine to strategically reduce budget pressures while growing our collections, all while meeting the requirements of the Tri-Council Open Access policy on Publications\(^ {10}\) and Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management\(^ {11}\): VIU Library manages VIUSpace\(^ {12}\), VIU’s open access institutional repository of scholarly works, and community-contributed content; the library is co-leading the development of the BC Digital Library, in collaboration with cross-sector organizations, and the library is a member of the VIU Strategic Research Plan Advisory Committee.

\(^{10}\) http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_F6765465.html
\(^{11}\) http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_83F7624E.html
\(^{12}\) https://viurrspace.ca/
Key actions:

1. **Electronic and Physical Collections:**
   a) Participate fully in consortial electronic resource offerings, where broader access and reduced costs are manifest, and where appropriate;
   b) Manage the Nanaimo, Cowichan, and Powell River physical collections to ensure our users’ access to relevant materials throughout the VIU region, in support of their learning and scholarly work;
   c) Continue our participation and leadership in the COPPUL Shared Print Archive Network (SPAN) initiative;
   d) Develop our Special Collections in support of the educational, scholarly, and research needs of the VIU community, in accordance with Special Collections Guidelines;
   e) Develop or evolve non-traditional collections in support of VIU programs and community (e.g., tools; education curriculum collection; accessible collections);
   f) Design strategies to replenish media and equipment loans in support of the student and faculty experience;
   g) Demonstrate continued financial stewardship and acumen in strategically addressing market, inflationary and exchange pressures on content budgets;
   h) Seek and listen for guidance from Indigenous Elders, faculty, and community members about how to respect Indigenous Knowledges and value systems in relation to receiving, caring for, protecting, and returning Indigenous Knowledges.

2. **Open Access, content creation, and preservation:**
   a) Educate and support faculty and students with respect to knowledge mobilization initiatives;
   b) Co-develop an institutional policy in the context of the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications;
   c) Grow, manage, and promote VIU’s institutional repository, VIUSpace, and provide associated scholarship and publication supports and services;
d) Significantly increase the library’s capacity to digitize contributions and provide post-contribution enhancements (e.g., metadata; accessibility mark-up), envisioning ourselves both as a content spoke and a content hub;

e) Lead and participate in regional digitization initiatives with a view to best practice and sustainability;

f) Surface, define, and expand the intersections between VIU Library’s Special Collections and VIUSpace;

g) Identify and manage issues of preservation and knowledge obsolescence primarily through the COPPUL, SPAN, the COPPUL Digital Preservation Network (DPN), and Research Data Canada and CANARIE initiatives, in alignment with Tri-Council guidelines.

Resources:
Collection Evolution Framework, Special Collections Guidelines, Scholarship, Research and Creative Activity (SRCA).

Assessment:
Biannual survey; supplemental surveys; liaison feedback; collection usage; VIUSpace metrics; Integrated Library System metrics; electronic resource COUNTER reports.

3. Engaged community and informed practice

| Primarily supports these Academic Plan objectives: Community engagement; Institutional effectiveness; Student learning, engagement and success; Academic community |

To know, support, and reflect the VIU community, the library must continue to engage with that community to the greatest extent possible. Whether on campus or with the mid-island Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM) network, local governments or service organizations – in any case, we will continue to embed ourselves, and to make our presence, our services, and our supports known.

Community engagement extends off campus and off island. Our geographic location must not hamper our engagement with our colleagues and partners regionally, nationally, or
internationally. For an institution and library of our size and scale, such engagement is critical to our leverage, to our practical and professional practice, and ultimately, to our ability to best support the VIU community.

Key actions:

- Host, co-host, lead, facilitate and support community gatherings and discourse amongst knowledge sector partners and the VIU community at large;
- Review continuous learning mechanisms and supports for library faculty and staff;
- Demonstrate professionalism and respect at all times; strive for agility; recognize accomplishments, and learn from mistakes;
- Explore library experiential learning opportunities for students, building on external review recommendations;
- Offer opportunities for staff and partners to develop cultural competencies, including with respect to Indigenous Knowledge and the international student population;
- Develop internal (to campus) and external (to broader community) communications mechanisms that promote relevant library services and that enhance transparency;
- Revitalize website; integrate library platforms to maximize available information and consistency.

Resources:
Formal and informal institutional and individual staff relationships and memberships.

Assessment:
Biannual survey; supplemental surveys; liaison feedback; MassMailer and social media metrics; overall metrics; VIUSpace metrics; VIU Librarian publication metrics; Memorandum of Agreements.

4. Supporting Student Success

Primarily supports these Academic Plan objectives: Student learning, engagement and success; Institutional effectiveness; Academic community; Program quality
Transformation in the K-12 system is moving curriculum from “tell me how” to “show me how.” Similar shifts in post-secondary education emphasize dynamic, data-driven learning. The library’s ability to fully support the VIU community over the next several years will in large part be determined by the degree to which we can situate our work, our technologies and our resources into the daily experience of students – both on and off (distant; mobile) campus.

The library stewards numerous collaborative technology initiatives – from the design, implementation, and maintenance of the Commons, to the stewardship of Digital Access Student Service Fee projects. Regionally and nationally, VIU Library has been at the forefront of community-based approaches to solve, resolve, or optimize technology issues broadly. This type of leadership will continue, and indeed grow, as we intentionally seek to augment traditional Information Technology approaches with our expertise, borne in part from the increasingly nuanced, user-centric perspectives and interoperability demands that we solve, navigate, or support daily.

VIU Library’s research help services and information literacy initiatives are critical to student success. Augmented by various technologies, these services equip students with core literacies that support analytical inquiry and bring meaning to the digital environment. These foundational academic library services have evolved with and continually influence our technology requirements. Over the next several years, the pace of this evolution will quicken.

Key actions:

1. **Technology leadership:**
   a. Advance digital equity: advocate for expanded student access to the tools, applications, resources, infrastructure, and equipment needed to enable success both on and off campus, as an IT priority equivalent to competing or overlapping institutional priorities, like VIU’s enterprise and infrastructure renewal projects AURORA and BOREALIS;
   b. Lead and collaborate with other technology thought centres on campus and in our sector – Information Technology (Department), CIEL, Scholarly Research and Creative Activity; BCNET, CANARIE, COPPUL, National Data Research Strategy, CRKN, The Libraries Co-op, and others – to improve both the student digital learning experience, and the strategic positioning of
VIU in regards to next-generation learning requirements and digital research infrastructure on campus and beyond;

c. Implement open source, standards-based technologies when feasible as a salve to market pressures and vendor-lock methodologies that defeat or restrict interoperability;

d. Analyze existing workflows and approaches with a view to enhance the user experience (e.g., orientation; student ID);

e. Advocate for improved connectivity throughout the VIU service area, in partnership with aligned organizations and partners.

2. Information and digital literacies:

a. In light of the new Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy (IL) Framework, as well as other advances in information literacy research and practice and the development within VIU of institutional Graduate Attributes, review and optimize library IL initiatives;

b. Consider the student digital literacy experience within the context of IL practice and other academic literacies (e.g., reading, writing, representing ideas graphically/pictorially);

c. Consider the applicability to our local context of tools such as Mukurtu and Traditional Knowledge licenses for mediating culturally responsive access and use of Indigenous Knowledges.

d. Review and refurbish library instruction labs and instructional resources;

e. Continuously review research help services and graduate student supports;

f. Continue to provide student-centred research help services

**Resources:**
Information Literacy Plan; Commons Plan; Future of Reference Plan

**Assessment:**
Biannual survey; supplemental surveys; liaison feedback; overall metrics; Student Service Fee assessments (study room usage, observations); input from VIU faculties and administrative bodies
5. Decolonizing our services

Primarily supports these Academic Plan objectives: Indigenous commitment; Student learning, engagement and success; Institutional effectiveness; Academic community; Program quality

Specific context and actions toward decolonizing library services are presented throughout this plan, intentionally, in a commitment to respect Indigenous Knowledges, sustain relationships and promote a sense of belonging that has often been lacking for Indigenous people in academic spaces. That this approach to creating the planning document has been effortful reinforces that we have a long way to go; that we need to be continually mindful as we attempt to build and maintain relationships, and to develop and offer services to Indigenous users of the VIU Library; that we do need to preserve this distinct section in our plan, as we seek to make respect for Indigenous Knowledges and services that are welcoming to Indigenous peoples integral to our work.

The notion of Indigenous Knowledge stewardship within an academic library counters traditional approaches to the management of libraries; there exist multiple value systems, domains of knowledges, reciprocal systems, and protocols of caring for, sharing, accessing, and protecting knowledges. We must acknowledge that libraries’ traditional approaches to collecting information, managing collections, and providing open access to information are not universal in meeting the needs of all cultural groups and peoples.

In recognizing these diverse needs, we must understand that there are Indigenous Knowledges that libraries cannot ethically collect or own, or appropriately determine access, use, and applications for. If we reconsider the library’s traditional roles as collector, manager, and the dichotomous roles of gatekeeper or universal access provider, then we move toward acknowledging the legitimacy of multiple value and knowledge systems, with protocols of responsibility to Indigenous Knowledges, thereby expanding the library’s expertise and practice beyond traditional academic domains of knowledge.
Library roles in relation to digitization, preservation and stewardship of Indigenous Knowledges occur in relationship to Indigenous communities. Procedures and protocols for Library stewardship are communicated by communities for negotiation, understanding, and agreement prior to proceeding, or agreeing not to proceed. VIU Library is seeking and listening for specific guidance from VIU’s Indigenous Elders, faculty, and community members about how to respect Indigenous Knowledges and value systems in relation to receiving, caring for, protecting, and returning Indigenous Knowledges.

Key actions:

- Consult and respond in relationship with community members about matters concerning Indigenous Knowledge, in the spirit of “sit, watch, listen;”
- Articulate library approaches and commitments to capacity support, stewardship, and Indigenization in consultation with stakeholders;
- Design a responsive service model of library outreach in the VIU Indigenous campus community, focusing on students and faculty, including Elders-in-Residence;
- Engage students with Indigenous information issues and methodologies through both library instruction sessions, research help in-library, and at Shq’apthut, and via specific course development in partnership with FNS faculty;
- Serve on the COPPUL Indigenous Knowledge Standing Committee;
- Honour Indigenous Elders and community members as valued collaborators by acknowledging their contributions and allocating resources for tangible recognition.

Resources:


Assessment:

Reputation in communities.