Library and Archives
Strategy 2015 – 2018
INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the Library and Archives Strategy for the University of York 2015 – 2018. It supports the broader Information Strategy, and articulates the way in which Library and Archives will support the needs of the University of York as expressed in various strategies such as the University Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Research Strategy.

The document comments on the current perceptions of Library and Archives provision, explains the challenges facing the University Library and Archives in the arena of information and information management, and explains how we intend to respond in the next planning period.

The document itself is intended to be a living document with activities linked to the key objectives being reviewed, amended, and added to on a regular basis.
ABOUT US

The Library provides resources and services to support students, academics, researchers and other staff in their pursuit of learning, teaching and research.

Underpinning areas of activity include:

- Acquisition and storage of books, journals, databases and other academic materials
- First line enquiry support face to face, email and phone for library and IT enquiries
- Liaison services with academic departments, with an emphasis on support for teaching and learning
- Research support services
- Physical learning spaces
- Cataloguing and discovery platforms for resources

- Skills training for staff and students
- Repository services including White Rose Research Online, White Rose E-theses Online and the Digital Library
- Representation of the University on national professional groups
- Advocacy for the University in areas of professional expertise

The mission of the Borthwick Institute for Archives is to support and expand the University of York’s cultural endeavour and contribute to human understanding through collecting archives (in all formats), preserving them and making them widely available for research.

Underpinning areas of activity include:

- Identification and acquisition of archives in accordance with the collecting policy and national standards
- Arrangement, description and discovery of archive materials
- Preservation and conservation of archives
- Research support for staff and students, including development of research grants
- Enquiry services
- Copying and digitisation services

- Teaching on relevant university courses
- Outreach including face to face sessions
- University records management
- Freedom of Information and Data Protection lead for the University
- Representation on national professional groups
- Contributing to national and international developments across the archive, records management and information legislation sectors
HOW WE MEASURE UP

The University Library and Archives has improved significantly in the last five years: the refurbishment of the Library, the Flexible Loans project and success in Customer Service Excellence accreditation are examples of this improvement that is reflected in better results in all of the major student satisfaction surveys. These results include 5th position in the 2015 THES Student Experience survey and a 17 point improvement (from our position in 2010) in the Library National Student Survey. However, in spite of this major improvement, the current (2016) NSS satisfaction at 90% nevertheless leaves York at 31st in the UK, and 13th in the Russell Group, for library provision. The following sections review the strengths and weaknesses of our collections, services and facilities.

Challenges: Collections

In its broadest sense collections can be defined as an aggregation of physical and electronic items brought together to serve a particular audience or particular purpose. A collection is dynamic, subject to change in size, diversity and format.

York benefits from many unique and distinctive collections, which are attractive to our own staff and students and to visiting scholars. Our Library collections service the subjects taught at the University and the research portfolio. The collections include journals, books, and audio visual and have seen a dramatic shift over the past few decades from a predominance of physical resources to an increase in digital media.

Our concept of collections has expanded in more recent years to embrace what can be described as the “knowledge assets” of the University, and have led the Library to take an active role in the curation and preservation of the outputs and data produced by academic colleagues.

The Borthwick holds archives from the early 13th to the 21st centuries across a diverse range of themes and geographical areas; the York Minster Library, operated in partnership with the University, is the largest Cathedral library in the UK; both have key strengths in areas that are critical for the University’s research.

York also enjoys the advantage of close proximity to the Boston Spa Reading Rooms of the British Library (the Library provides a regular free bus service to the BL for University members).

Caring for and providing access to our unique and distinctive collections is a continuing process. The archives at the Borthwick, growing to support research and teaching across the University, are not fully catalogued, while many catalogues, created up to 60 years ago, exist only in paper formats. Enabling the discovery of the archives and special collections is a key priority.

Benchmarking of our collections against other libraries demonstrates that York has considerable strengths in important research and teaching areas such as stained glass, archaeological conservation, TV production and direction, and health and health care.

Satisfaction with collections remains mixed, however, with content (and access to content) being the area of lowest satisfaction for Library users. Satisfaction with collections varies considerably between disciplines and user groups. Broadly, users in science disciplines are more satisfied than those in social science or humanities disciplines, though the detailed picture is complex; and undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are more satisfied than postgraduate researchers or academic staff. Ensuring that the Library and Archives deliver the right content and the best access to that content to all users in the appropriate format is a key and continuing concern that requires an in depth understanding of the needs of each discipline and user group.
Challenges: Digital Environment and Digital Literacy

Embracing the Digital Age in terms of collections, and the services and facilities required to exploit them presents many and various opportunities. In this fast-developing area it is not always clear which direction will be fruitful and sustainable; good judgement and some luck is needed to choose the right ways forward, but there are already some clear indicators. Firstly the media of our collections will be increasingly varied. Already our collections are a mixture of analogue and digital media. Digital media are likely to become the dominant format, (whether purchased and “rented” materials, or in-house digitised and born digital material) judged either by expenditure or by use. There are distinct differences in the penetration of digital media into the scholarly communications of different subject disciplines so the rate of change will vary.

In the short to medium term growth of digital information is unlikely to release the pressure on space which we are experiencing at the moment, and long term storage of selected printed materials will always be necessary.

Managing digital content presents considerable challenges that are not yet properly understood, let alone solved, anywhere in the world. We have a thorough understanding of the requirements and costs of long term storage, preservation and curation of physical materials but the equivalent understanding for digital media is still evolving. Work ongoing in the Archives at York aided by the expertise of IT Services will enable us to establish costed standards and practices, for managing our digital content.

Exploiting knowledge assets in the Digital Age requires the continuous development of digital skills in our staff and students. Library and Archives will shape the development of digital literacy across the University through specialist teaching and training, embracing opportunities presented by the York Pedagogy.

Challenges: Facilities

The improvement in the quality, quantity and variety of study space available in the University Library following the refurbishment project has been of huge benefit. Indeed, the impact of this on user satisfaction has been substantial, with a 44% increase in the perception of the Library environment between the 2010 and 2014 Library surveys. The need for further study space and stock remains high, despite these improvements. Currently there is little space available to increase printed stock, and our external store only provides a partial answer to this difficulty by housing lower-use physical collections. The growth in student numbers has meant that, in spite of a 40% increase in capacity between 2006/7 and 2013/14, the number of students per seat has increased from 10.2 students per seat to 10.75 students per seat, and is likely to increase further in the coming period. The gap between average RLUK provision and provision at York remains significant: 7.7 students per seat compared with 10.5 students per seat at York.

There is a clear connection between the worsening of the seat per student ratio and the reduction in satisfaction with space between the 2013 and 2014 Library surveys and there are growing demands for more study space from students, which will almost certainly intensify as we expand our student numbers. Projected growth in student numbers at York by 2018/19 will require a further 700 study spaces to allow us to achieve the current RLUK mean. However, our competitors are already changing the basis of our calculations: Sheffield University’s new Diamond Building, opening in September 2015, will add 1,000 study spaces, whilst the new Laidlaw Library, opened recently at Leeds, has increased their study spaces by 1,000. This will increase the RLUK mean beyond its current figure.

Challenges: Open access

Over the past decade the movement for Open Access to the outcomes of publicly funded research has grown considerably.

Researchers at the University of York have Open Access requirements regarding publications placed upon them from various sources including:

- Research funders
- HEFCE’s ‘Policy on Open Access for the post-2014 REF
- University Policy on the Publication of Research

The requirements placed on our academics vary according to their funding source and the area is complex and fluctuating at time of writing.

The financial implications of Open Access, particularly ‘hybrid gold open access, are high. The library community, through Research Libraries UK, is seeking to engage with this issue and as a member of this body, the Library will be involved in discussions, as well as providing local support and services to the academic community.

RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy highlight additional expectations with regard to open access, this for open data. The overarching statement being:

“Publicly funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, which should be made openly available with as few restrictions as possible in a timely and responsible manner.”

This requirement, both in terms of compliance but also good research data management practice, presents challenges to both academic staff and support services in ensuring good management of these important assets.

1 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2014/201407/
2 Where currently both an article processing charge and journal subscription cost apply
INTRODUCTION TO OUR STRATEGY

After careful analysis of the current University strategies, our understanding of our current strengths and weakness and the challenges before us, the strategy which follows has been developed.

The four key themes are:

- Access to Knowledge
- Enhancing Teaching and Learning
- Facilitating Research Excellence
- Improving Performance

Each has underlying objectives which are supported by a number of projects and activities. It is envisaged that the four key themes will remain stable during the lifetime of this strategy, whilst the objectives will be reviewed each year to ensure they best meet University and departmental priorities. The project list will be a dynamic document with work being completed and added during the academic year.

In delivering the strategy we will be working to seven key principles:

- Access to services and information 24/7 365
- Self-service with access to support in case of need
- Working in partnership with academics, researchers, students and support services across the University to deliver services appropriate to needs
- Working in partnership with external agencies locally, nationally and internationally where this is of benefit to the institution
- Maximising the benefits from investment in services through improvements to internal process and decision making, partnership with other institutions, or challenging suppliers on charging and costs
- Decisions based on sound management information and customer needs
- Enhancing the user experience

Key theme: Access to knowledge

Access to knowledge, provided by our own collections or those collections held elsewhere underpins the intellectual efforts of the University. As acknowledged earlier there are various challenges which we need to meet to continue to provide for the needs of our users. Over the period of the strategy our work on Access to knowledge will be a key focus for activity and work undertaken will fall under four main objectives:

- Understanding our collections
- Defining our collections strategy
- Improving discovery and access
- Building collections for learning, teaching and research

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- Enhancing the user experience
Key theme: Enhancing teaching and learning

Projects running under other key themes will also contribute to Enhancing teaching and learning, however the key deliverables under this theme will address the emerging digital skills gap in staff and students and the increasing demand for high quality study space at the university. We have five current objectives:

- **Supporting the York Pedagogy**
  - Library and Archives is supporting the York Pedagogy project directly though staff engagement but we have other opportunities to contribute through ensuring that student digital literacy skills equip them for learning, teaching and research. This will include a review of induction and production of online materials to support skills development.

- **Digital literacies for staff**
  - Staff in the University need to match students in their digital literacy skills – the initial focus of our development will be staff in Library and Archives with a view to the roll out of activities across the University.

- **Supporting the distance learning agenda**
  - We will engage with the Distance Learning Forum to understand emerging strategies and advise on the provision of support services.

- **Developing spaces**
  - Student demand for dedicated study space has outstripped that available in the current University Library buildings. We will maximise the use of space within our existing estate, whilst collaborating with colleagues in Estates to deliver additional spaces in new builds and identifying space which can be re-purposed during exam periods.

- **Improving access to services**
  - In servicing this objective we will be looking at our second line support offer to increase access to support and implementing a chat service extending this element to a 24/7 provision.

Key theme: Facilitating research excellence

Following the publication of the Research Strategy in 2015, Library and Archives is will be exploring ways to support University researchers in their work. This will include improving and developing services and facilities to support postgraduate students, and services to support the York Publications Policy and research data management. We have four main objectives:

- **Supporting the York Graduate School**
  - As the York Graduate School develops we will investigate ways in which we can support its work. We will explore the support needs of PGR students to tailor our services and provision appropriately and pilot initiatives such as writing workshops.

- **Supporting scholarly communication**
  - With Open Access an increasingly common requirement by funders we will develop the York Publications Service to assist academics in depositing their outputs whilst lessening their administrative burden and challenging traditional publishing models with the White Rose University Press.

- **Supporting research data management**
  - We will provide support and services to researchers enabling them to manage their research data and ensure archiving and preservation of these important assets.

- **Improving services to researchers**
  - Guided by discussions with academics at York we will identify new services to support the work of the different research disciplines. In the first instance we will investigate the need for and use of bibliometrics in collaboration with colleagues in the Research Support Office.
Key theme: Improving our performance

A key focus for our activity in this theme is to examine how we will improve performance across the University and within Library and Archives. This will involve understanding the needs of our customers, ensuring services are fit for purpose and that customers understand and can access services we provide. As our staff are key to our services and performance, staff development is included within this theme. We have eight main objectives:

- **Understanding requirements**
  - The priority for understanding our users in the first year of our strategy will be focused on academic staff; we will be seeking to better understand their work practices as applied to teaching and to research. This will allow us to refine and plan new services to meet their requirements.

- **Ensuring financial viability**
  - We will review the collections budget to check that we are delivering best value for money and articulate the value of our collections to the academic community.

- **Communications and strategic marketing**
  - We will review our marketing and communication plan to ensure the effectiveness of activity in this area. A key focus for marketing will be our collections to maximise their use.

- **Compliance**
  - Focussing on Information governance (including data protection and information policy) we will raise awareness and provide training on these issues so that the University is able to comply with relevant legislation.

- **Developing our staff**
  - Customer service training will be delivered over the first two years of our strategy supporting our ongoing commitment to customer service. We will provide development opportunities to our staff through University training courses and through internal initiatives such as career development portfolios and our manager development programme. Following reorganisation, training will be provided to staff developing into new roles and areas of responsibility.

- **Improving the way we work**
  - We are committed to continuous improvement and we will initiate a series of projects to improve the way we work, particularly concentrating on process review.

- **Measuring our success**
  - We will continue to develop and refine our data gathering, and benchmarking activities and use the data to inform practice and management in the department.

- **Outreach**
  - We will extend our collaborative working to partners outside the University to provide added value for the University and our external partners. Key organisations for partnership activity include York Minster, York City Archive, White Rose Libraries and Research Libraries UK.
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES STRATEGY – APPENDIX

Vision

Working in partnership with all members of the University the Library and Archives will enable the University to deliver its mission, by providing access to world-class collections, facilities and services.