

Academic Unit Review Report 2026

University of Regina Dr. John Archer Library and Archives

Submitted on June 20, 2026 by:

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Executive Summary

University leadership universally expressed the critical importance of the library in supporting student success and sustaining the intellectual life and vibrancy of the University of Regina. They described the library as the “intellectual and social centre of our university.” While recognizing that the University of Regina, as is the case in so many other peer institutions in Canada at the current time, faces significant financial pressures, leadership nevertheless expressed a strong desire to envision and support the development of “the library of the future.”

While the scope and impact of academic libraries has increased over the past decades, at the same time the general trend has been that universities’ investments in their libraries has declined over this period. Libraries have been doing ever more with ever less for many years within a knowledge and information environment that is increasingly complex. In this context the review team notes that all Canadian academic libraries have been evolving significantly over the past two decades as the shift from analogue to digital knowledge creation, dissemination, and preservation accelerates. Over this period, the role of the library has altered from being the repository of the products of the research enterprise, to an active participant in the full research lifecycle. So too, have physical libraries as study spaces, and as engagement spaces with librarians and staff providing a wide range of reference and instruction services, continued to deepen engagement with students across a broad range of services to meet new and emergent learning and skills-building needs.

Many libraries have now reached a tipping point due to lack of investment, just at a time when they are more important than ever to the success of the university’s mission. There is inherent institutional risk in not fully leveraging the library’s role and investing in the library as a platform and accelerator for research innovation; as a foundation for student academic success and retention; and, as a critical agora for civic engagement and development.

The ongoing support and commitment of the President and Provost, in particular, are essential if the library is to fulfill its unique area of responsibility on campus and in the community and realize its potential as the library of the future.

Happily, with continued and thoughtful investment and support, the Dr. John Archer Library and Archives, is very well-positioned to respond to the current environment and “level up” thanks to current library leadership. The review team commends the library leadership for creating the conditions for the growth and evolution of the library. These include adaptability and nimbleness to change and openness to new ways of working and supporting university priorities. The library has built strong and trusted networks of connections both within and externally to the university; this all achieved despite what has been, arguably, significant underinvestment in the library over time. Even so, the library is better positioned than many of its peers to leverage this foundational work, seize the opportunities it has created during this critical period of paradigm change in the role of academic libraries within higher education. The rapid and accelerating shift from analogue to digital knowledge creation and dissemination – and its concurrent technological requirements – demands a strategic and urgent response.

As one university leader asserted, the University of Regina has a “gem” in its library, however without increased financial support at this critical juncture it is at significant risk of ossifying. As another individual expressed to us, “the library is five times better than it deserves to be with the funding that it has.” This speaks highly of the library but is also a caution for the future.

For your consideration, the review team has a number of observations and related recommendations that support *Together We Serve (2026-2035)* as the University looks to the future of the Dr. John Archer Library and Archives.

Summary of Recommendations

I. Strategic Alignment: Together, We Serve

I-1a: The Library should refocus and reallocate some librarian time to expanding programs beyond AI awareness and begin supporting AI literacy as a key service to research and learning (such as being a key partner in the development and delivery of the undergraduate AI literacy course currently in the process of formulation).

I-1b: The Library is encouraged to convene ongoing cross-campus discussions with researchers to better understand researcher needs, as well as what skills and expertise will be required of the Library in the machine-learning era.

I-2: Consider pursuing partnerships with the public library and others as appropriate to access federal funding to support the development of AI literacy programming.

I-3: Consider annualizing an event similar to the AI Futures Event that would continue to explore AI on campus and in the community.

II. Organizational Structure & Human Resources

II-1a: Further adopt qualitative and quantitative data driven analyses to help establish clear priorities for future and current services, focusing on the campus culture, outcomes, scalability, and sustainability and recognize the power in saying “no” and in sunseting some activities.

II-1b: Consider the adoption of Power BI dashboards.

II-2a: Engage with faculty and units external to the Library to identify priority services and their level of interest in/understanding of the various items on the overall service menu. Ascertain if there are areas where the library can divest, additional opportunities for cross-unit partnerships, and/or the need for more robust communications.

II-2b: Consider the relationships between liaison librarians and units and the assignment of liaison duties to areas where the expertise is needed and can generate the outcomes expected.

II-3: When the students are on campus, so too should be the librarians.

III. Technology & Knowledge Production

III-1: As the library of the future, Archer should consider its collaborative role as a generative AI leader and hub relative to research support, encouraging digital innovation and supporting research productivity through future facing services that address versioning of research, knowledge translation, data analysis and collections as data etc.

III-2a: Establish a process to regularly and systematically explore options for additional self-service and technology (AI) assisted services that would be complementary to the face-to-face service environment and that would provide new avenues for service for students preferring alternative options.

III-2b: Explore opportunities for the university to support and extend technology-enabled spaces (i.e. access to generative AI computing power, Virtual and Augmented Reality spaces, maker spaces, etc.)

IV. Student Success & The Learning Environment

IV-1: Collect quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data to assess impact of library and future planning:

- a) including observations of how students and others are using the spaces in the library
- b) asking clients about gaps in service
- c) involving students in developing innovative ideas for space
- d) ask Faculty members about their vision for the library

IV-2a: Subject to the findings in IV-1, create improved silent study space - considering more use of TEK booths that preserve quiet study while offering the ability for podcasting and collaboration etc.

IV-2b: Subject to the findings in IV-1, create more collaborative space such as a discovery centre or digital innovation lab with enveloping services.

IV-3: Conduct an accessibility audit of the facility, including considerations related to the height of desks and tables, readability of signs, and impact of lighting and sound.

IV-4a: Consider conducting a review of student facing services to better understand student needs, to prioritize allocation of scarce resources and to gain the opportunity for increased external visibility.

IV-4b: Continue to support Open Access initiatives and expand the support for Open Educational Resources (OERs).

IV-5a: Consider working with faculty partners and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to create rich opportunities for students to engage at a higher level with library related technologies, projects, and collections for the mutual benefit of the students and the library.

IV-5b: Explore the potential for making research projects and experiential learning initiatives an ongoing program.

V. Research Services

V-1: Continue to build-out the in-kind and at-cost services the Library can offer to researchers as part of their grant-funded projects (e.g., RDM, PIDs, metadata, spaces, knowledge versioning, preservation, etc.)

VI. Collection Stewardship & Discovery

VI-1: Annual inflationary increases for acquisitions from FY 2027 onwards should be more closely aligned with the [EBSCO Serials Price Projection Report](#) (see page 3 of the 2026 EBSCO report).

VI-2: Ensure collection development directly mirrors shifting academic needs so that scarce resources are appropriately aligned with a future focus in supporting teaching, research, and scholarship.

VII. Community & Professional Engagement

VII-1a: Engage in strategic planning for events hosted in and / or by the library. Part of the planning could consider the library's capacity to host events and determine the purpose of the events and their relation to the library's mission.

VII-1b: Ensure that a detailed external communications strategy accompanies the Strategic Events Plan.

VIII. Financial Sustainability & Infrastructure

VIII-1: Protect the Library from further budget reductions and create a multi-year plan to restore funding to the level of 3.5% of the annual University operating budget.

VIII-2a: Engage with University Advancement to explore the potential for attracting new donors that would support a variety of programs and projects in the Archer Library.

VIII-2b: Create a strategic development plan for the Library, identifying a pipeline of donors, strategies for moves management, and appropriate training for the next Dean, key librarians and staff members.

VIII-3: Build a clear process to request financial support for archival and other collection donations.

VIII-4: Work with an external space and facilities planner to create a phased, Ten Year Master Facilities Plan for the Library to optimize spaces for learning and research, while also identifying and addressing deferred maintenance.

Note on Recommendations

Overall, the Committee agreed that the Archer Library is a very well run library that has achieved more than expected given its resourcing and size. It has shown significant leadership on campus and beyond in key areas such as Artificial Intelligence socialization, forging collaborative partnerships, innovative service offerings that connect the library to the larger community, incorporating Indigenous world views, and in adopting a very student focused orientation. While we have many recommendations, they are to make a good library even better; more future-focused as the “library of the future” and as such, best able to respond to *Together We Serve*. Some of our recommendations would require new resources or reallocation of existing resources but we have suggested revenue generation, cost saving and prioritization strategies.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an arms-length assessment of the Dr. John Archer Library & Archives, as per the University of Regina's *Academic Review Policy* and as requested by the Office of the Provost and the Council Committee on Academic Mission. The members of the review team were provided with a detailed terms of reference document and asked to provide recommendations to "identify strengths and weaknesses, stimulating program and services improvement and innovation."

The review team received a large collection of documentation in preparation for their site visit. The dossier included a detailed self-study including a SWOT analysis, as well as copies of planning documents, reports, and data. The reviewers conducted an on-site visit on April 7-8th 2026. The visit (as well as one subsequent video call) included more than twenty meetings with individuals and groups both from within the library and from units and individuals across campus. These included:

Internal units	Collection and Assessment Team Copyright & Scholarly Communications Dean, University Libraries and Archives Discovery Technologies Library Collection Services Library Impact Team Library Unit Review Steering Team Open Education President's Advisory Committee on Art Research Data Management Subject Liaison Librarians University Records and Information Management Archivist User Services Leadership Team
External units	Associate Vice-President (Academic) Associate Vice-President, Office of Indigenous Engagement Council Committee on Budget (Chair) Centre for Teaching & Learning Deans and Associate Deans (Arts; Education; Graduate Studies & Research; Kinesiology & Health Studies; Media Art & Performance; Nursing; Science) Federated colleges' librarians (Campion; Luther) Information Services Open Educational Resources Provost Student Affairs

	Student Success ta-tawâw Student Centre University Advancement University President UR International URPress
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The reviewers are grateful to all members of the University of Regina community for their outstanding work in preparing for our visit, and for their engagement and commitment to the success of the external review process as a whole. In particular, the team would like to thank Dr. Nilgün Önder, Associate Vice-President (Academic) and her office for their careful attention to our arrangements; as well as Karen Wiome, Director, Finance and Administration, Dr. John Archer Library and Archives, who looked after the team during the site visit.

Commensurate with the unit review engagement was the expectation that the Review Team would consider the various documents provided as well as input from meetings held during the review and address the components as follows.

Fulfillment of Unit Aims and Objectives - Identified Strengths, Challenges, Gaps and Opportunities

The Self-Study was comprehensive and insightful in identifying strengths, challenges, gaps, and opportunities. Most notably it was evident that the Dean of University Libraries and Archives had not only set clear strategic objectives which were aligned with the the University's 2020-2025 strategic plan *All our Relations: kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak* but had established a process by which their progress and completion was measured and reported objectively with a scorecard. Additional strategic initiatives that responded to *All our Relations* were undertaken.

Most of the new initiatives in support of Students Success, Discovery and Research, Impact and Identity, Technology Support, Truth and Reconciliation, and Environment and Climate Impact were consistent with those undertaken in other Canadian research libraries. However, the breadth of activity associated with Truth and Reconciliation was particularly substantial and, although not identified as such, represents national leadership in this area. In the same way, while most research libraries have digitization

programs, the ability of the Archer Library to almost double the number of digital objects in the past five years is commendable. Although not specifically highlighted as a strength, but particularly noteworthy was the numerous partners that were involved and the connection of the projects to the community.

Both the President's Art Collection and the Indigenous Art Collection as well as the management activities enveloping these collections are strengths of the portfolio. Approximately 50% of the President's Art Collection is on display on campus. It was noted that "art enhances learning and the working environment", but must also be balanced with a focus on safety and protection of the art. While the ongoing conservation of the collections is a challenge, the overall benefits that these bring to the campus under the stewardship of the Library are somewhat unique.

The Review Team acknowledges the financial challenges facing the University of Regina. These are not dissimilar to the situation experienced by many of the academic research institutions in Canada. The Self-Study indicated the significant financial issues associated with the collections budget and the lack of funding to address inflationary increases, especially compared to the rate of inflation and the inflationary support received at peer institutions. Evidence from other research libraries suggests that faculty and researchers deem collections as the single most important aspect of library services. Given the aspirations in *Together We Serve* related to research and scholarship, ongoing support for collections is important. The Team acknowledged and applauded the commitment made by the Senior Leadership of the University to create a separate funding stream for the Acquisitions Budget, which will not be subject to budget reductions and will be indexed for inflation.

The Self-Study also noted that in response to successive budget reductions, retirement vacancies were surrendered. This strategy has worked in the past but as the Library has few retirements forthcoming, there will be significant challenges in addressing further reductions in the budget. This potential issue is worth highlighting here.

At this point, there is no viable further reduction in library budget that would not have a major negative impact on the Library's ability to serve the university community – making it virtually impossible to become "the library of the future" or to respond fully to *Together We Serve*.

Strengths

In addition to the documents provided, the Review Team had the opportunity to meet with many of the campus partners and those whom the Library serves. It was clear that the Library leadership and all the staff have cultivated positive and meaningful relationships across campus with faculties, units, and the Federated Colleges. There was unanimous agreement on the importance of the library programs and services and the quality of the support that was received. In these reviews it is rare to have as many meetings as we did where no issues relative to the nature or degree of library support were raised and where no new services or gaps were identified. Clearly, from the campus perspective, the Library appears well poised to work collaboratively with those on campus and beyond to address the challenges in *Together We Serve*.

In spite of some financial challenges it is evident that the Archer Library is viewed as a dynamic and exciting work environment to those seeking employment. At times, hiring senior librarians and filling leadership positions can be challenging especially in areas where there is high demand and low supply of individuals with new skill sets and knowledge necessary to create the library of the future. The Dean has recruited a strong and skilled senior leadership team as well as a supporting staff complement of librarians, archivists, and other staff.

The Library has already demonstrated an ability to evolve services with some student-centric but relatively future focused initiatives. While still on a small scale, it is evident that the Archer Library is engaged in some of the elements in support of the new strategic plan. Often the campus forgets that the Library has a significant technological infrastructure and relies heavily on continuing evolving technologies to deliver a realm of programs and services. Engagement with these technologies in libraries can provide numerous opportunities for students in a variety of faculties and departments. There is opportunity for research and scholarship as well as experiential learning. The Self-Study identified one such experience related to a computer science faculty member and student; and another commercial opportunity related to the launch of the Dilex digital library search interface in collaboration with faculty, a graduate student, and a Saskatchewan tech company. These are but two examples of the ways that the Library can increase engagement on campus to create meaningful experiences for students in the spirit of *Together We Serve*.

The AI Futures Event organized by the Archer Library was another example of the exceptional leadership in the Library as well as the community building, technical skill, and political savvy held by members of the library senior leadership team and staff. Archer Library was a role model for other research libraries in Canada and has shown strength in community building, facilitating difficult conversations and in moving the institution forward in a good way relative to the future of AI on campus and in the community. The event was very well-received on campus and in the community and is an area where Archer should continue to lead.

Challenges

While the Archer Library has been very successful in introducing new programs and services, undertaking offerings not provided elsewhere on campus and thereby gaining the respect and support of other campus faculties and units, it does not come without a hidden cost. Staff generally welcome opportunities to feel needed and to provide programming that is well received. Moreover, it becomes increasingly difficult to say “no” when there is a high degree of efficacy for whatever is provided. However, it is possible to be a victim of one’s own success. Staff burnout can be a real issue. The uptake of all the programs, whether directly related to established outcomes or not, highlights a significant challenge associated with future sustainability and the ability to continuously deliver the suites of services the Archer Library has painstakingly developed. This is particularly true when there are financial challenges facing the Library and the University as a whole. Compared to other institutions with which we are familiar, it is also important to note that given the number of positions surrendered to budget reductions, the Library has little ability to respond effectively to environmental changes, growth, or to provide new services in response to *Together We Serve (2026-2035)*.

The Archer Library has identified interrelated issues around staff reductions, budget reductions, and burnout. Yet, we know that supporting the research imperatives in the new strategic plan could further tax the Library as it tries to be future focused. Potential initiatives relating to support for programs like DORA, mandatory research data management planning and deposit, article deposit, and a continued drive to open science could require a significant level of library support. Currently, it is still very easy to chase quick wins that come with a certain level of satisfaction when the events or programs are well attended. However, ongoing scalability can be a challenge especially with some activities like book readings. There are so many areas that will need future support that in times of fiscal restraint the

Library will need some new mechanisms for ascertaining which programs, activities, and initiatives take precedence and which require sunseting or reductions. Librarians and archivists bring a unique expertise to campus. It will be important to focus on that uniqueness when ascertaining and prioritizing services in the future.

The Archer Library was built in 1967 and was designed by Minoru Yamasaki which in and of itself is notable. While there have been infrastructure changes to the building, it is due for a significant facelift and potentially some repair. Like all Universities deferred maintenance is always a challenge. However, there could be further changes to the layout and function to better meet current and future needs of students, staff, and other patrons if it is to fulfill its potential as a library of the future.

It was not clear whether the Archer Library was included either formally or informally in the capital campaign. Libraries are often an area that sees significant collection and financial contributions in a capital campaign and at other times. There are many initiatives and opportunities that have the potential to attract donations of varying sizes within the library, often from Alumni and others who want to make a difference outside a specific faculty. Throughout the conversations we had it was not apparent that there was centralized support for any significant opportunities for fund development in or for the library for collections, facilities, programming, or infrastructure. In other Canadian research institutions, libraries often represent a significant opportunity and are contributors to the overall success of fund development campaigns on campus. There may be new fundraising opportunities that would benefit both the Library and the University.

Finally, the Team had some unresolved questions relative to the relationship between the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Library. We acknowledge that the relationship seems to work currently, but it was different from our own experiences and we did not have a clear understanding of the definition and differentiation of roles and responsibilities.

Working Environment

From the documents and meetings it was apparent that the environment at the University of Regina is extremely collegial and supportive. As noted previously, the Library has cultivated excellent relationships with the Federated College Libraries, and with Faculties and units across campus and is well poised to

work “together” in fulfillment of the new strategic plan. Unfortunately, we did not have an opportunity to meet with the First Nations University of Canada so we cannot comment objectively on the strength or nature of that relationship. We also did not have the opportunity to meet with undergraduate or graduate students from the University. We also cannot comment on the relationship between Library staff and students.

It is important to recognize that the staff in Archer Library have taken on many new initiatives, some of which are happening at other research libraries and others that are relatively unique to Archer either in type or organization. They have also prioritized face-to-face service as a presumed preferential delivery mode for the users. The human touch seemed to resonate on campus but it was not clear that this was fully tested with students. These choices have fully engaged staff with little or no additional capacity, but with a degree of satisfaction. The rapid and continual pace of service can contribute to burnout and stress over time. Some of these choices might be reviewed with more data driven information. As technology evolves and students engage increasingly with technology there may be opportunities to provide more student-centric and scalable services using new technologies. Additionally, the Library needs to consider what the current and future needs of students, staff, and other patrons, and whether their existing services meet those needs. Archer has already demonstrated their success in doing so with initiatives with self-check out - Meescan and using booklockers. Understanding higher level outcomes and setting data driven priorities may be necessary to manage an ever increasing volume of work and to eliminate or contain activities of lower priority or sustainability. No organization can successfully continue to do more with less.

Observations and Recommendations

I. Strategic Alignment: Together, We Serve

The University of Regina's "Together, We Serve" Strategic Plan Vision 2035 was launched on the second day of the reviewers' on-site visit. The team immediately recognized the library's vital role reflected in the plan's subtitle "Community, Discovery, Impact", and in all five of the plan's strategic priorities.

Recommendation 1: The Library's involvement in AI has largely been focused on "awareness" centred around the ethical use of AI. As experts in information literacy, the Library has a short-term opportunity to lead programs on AI literacy. Given that over the next 5-10 years the students coming to the University will likely have low levels of AI literacy even though they may have higher levels of AI experience, there is a significant opportunity for the Library to create life changing experiences. Libraries have traditionally led the development and delivery of literacy training including information and digital literacy so it is not unreasonable to expect the Library to lead the development and delivery of AI literacy, resources permitting.

I-1a: The Library should refocus and reallocate some librarian time to expanding programs beyond AI awareness and begin supporting AI literacy as a key service to research and learning (such as being a key partner in the development and delivery of the undergraduate AI literacy course currently in the process of formulation).

The Library's role in supporting research using generative AI is also important.

I-1b: The Library is encouraged to convene ongoing cross-campus discussions with researchers to better understand researcher needs and perspectives, as well as what skills and expertise will be required of the Library in the machine-learning era.

Recommendation 2: Given the many successful relationships that the Library has cultivated with other partners in the community, including the public library, there is an opportunity worth exploring relating to the AI literacy initiatives recently announced by the federal government with funding for public libraries and engagement for academic institutions. Archer Library has been very successful in community collaborations and this may be an area where a collaborative strategy for AI literacy may not only be efficient but also have funding available.

I-2: Consider pursuing new partnerships with the public library and others as appropriate to access federal funding to support the development of AI literacy programming.

Recommendation 3: During our two days of meeting, many people commented on the successful AI Futures conference organized by the Library in March 2026. Some pointed out that while the Library does not ‘own’ the concepts of AI and generative AI, as a unit that supports all other units, they are in a good position to coordinate different perspectives on the topic.

I-3: Consider annualizing an event similar to the AI Futures Event that would continue to explore AI on campus and in the community.

II. Organizational Structure & Human Resources

Many groups commented on the collaborative culture and strong leadership within the library. The library has a group of skilled and dedicated staff who take great pride in their work and are willing to work with other units to best serve their needs. This includes, but is not limited to, being physically present in spaces (e.g. tatâwaw Student Centre) to build relationships with people, going into classrooms to deliver information services content, locating resources for classes, developing reading lists, housing collections, developing and delivering workshops (e.g. copyright, AI), and promoting the work of other units through special events. Additionally, library staff were viewed as innovative, adaptive, and willing to experiment. Staff were also complimented on their responsiveness to inquiries and requests.

Recommendation 1: Challenges in terms of organizational structure and human resources include staff burnout, mental health and well-being, and undercapacity risks, largely due to reductions in staff size in recent years.

II-1a: Further adopt qualitative and quantitative data driven analyses to help establish clear priorities for future and current services, focusing on the campus culture, outcomes, scalability, and sustainability and recognize the power in saying “no” and in sunseting some activities .

II-1b: Consider the adoption of Power BI dashboards.

Recommendation 2: The Library is a partner with many units on campus in the delivery of programs and services (Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Centre for Teaching and Learning etc.) and in other instances works independently. Given the limited ability to grow the staff complement, it will continue

to be important to prioritize services that are a best fit for library expertise and of high value to user communities.

II-2a: Engage with faculty and units external to the Library to identify priority services and their level of interest in/understanding of the various items on the overall service menu. Ascertain if there are areas where the library can divest, additional opportunities for cross-unit partnerships, and/or the need for more robust communications.

Similar to other comparable institutions, liaison librarians have differential relationships with the units to which they are assigned, some work closely with units while others do not. Librarians and archivists have unique expertise not found elsewhere on campus. However, not all units acknowledge or need this expertise. There is opportunity to revisit the differential role of liaisons and determine whether some units do not need library assistance.

II-2b: Consider the relationships between liaison librarians and units and the assignment of liaison duties to areas where they are needed and can generate the outcomes expected.

Recommendation 3: The role of the library is to contribute to a vibrant intellectual culture. There is a critical accountability for librarians to understand that they are in service to the university and, while there should be a certain flexibility in the work environment, they should be present in-person to engage with students, faculty, researchers, and the community on campus. As library staff themselves commented, the library is “a space with a human touch.”

II-3: When the students are on campus, so too should be the librarians.

III. Technology & Knowledge Production

Libraries continue to change how they collect, store, and provide access to information in the digital environment. Physical materials are still relevant, however like all other academic libraries, the library spends much more of their budget on digital assets rather than physical materials. While digital assets require less space to house, they require expertise and significant support to acquire, provide access to, and preserve them.

Recommendation 1: Because of the Library’s rich history in collaboration and the many effective partnerships they have developed across campus and in the community, the Archer Library has potential to take a larger role in digital innovation by engaging graduate and undergraduate students through

research and other experiential learning. Working collaboratively not only improves overall user experience but supports the transition to more multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarship. The changes in our environment resulting from generative artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies suggests that libraries should begin thinking about our “Collections as Data:.

III-1: As the library of the future, Archer should consider its collaborative role as a generative AI leader and hub relative to research support, encouraging digital innovation and supporting research productivity through future facing services that address versioning of research, knowledge translation, data analysis and collections as data etc.

Recommendation 2: Increasingly, students have different expectations of the library and a library experience that involves increased access and use of new technologies. Evidence from other comparable libraries suggests that students also tend to embrace new technologies and more efficient and timely ways of handling rote tasks and providing access to information and resources.

III - 2a: Establish a process to regularly and systematically explore options for additional self-service and technology (AI) assisted services that would be complementary to the face-to-face service environment and that would provide new avenues for service for students preferring alternative options.

III - 2b: Explore opportunities for the university to support and extend technology-enabled spaces (i.e. access to generative AI computing power, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality spaces, maker spaces, etc.)

IV. Student Success & The Learning Environment

In the words of the author Neil Gaiman "Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one." Numerous groups spoke about the critical role that the library plays in student success. Beyond being a source of information, the library plays an active role in supporting students with their search skills and study habits. It is also an important safe, open, accessible place for students to be as part of their learning environment. The recent opening of Starbucks near the entrance to the Archer Library and expansion of events hosted in the library have contributed to it being seen as a vibrant space for students and community members.

Recommendation 1: Evidence across Canada suggested that how the library is being used by students, faculty, and the community has changed. For students, the physical space is becoming more of a place to work than a place to primarily find information. The library has done some renovations of their spaces in the past 10 years to address these changing needs (two adaptable classrooms - Wascana Room; addition of single seats / chairs by windows; Archway). They have also added the ability to reserve spaces (study rooms). There are spaces in the library for quiet work, however these could be expanded. While some students want / need to work alone, there is also a need for spaces that allow students to work together. Archer Library has recognized the need for different kinds of spaces and student engagement and has created different zones to facilitate multiple needs and uses. Evidence from other comparable Canadian institutions suggests that library study space is one of the most important and highly valued elements of the “library” to students. Similarly, faculty value the library space because it allows students to engage with others outside of their discipline and engage in more critical thinking.

IV-1: Collect quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data to assess impact of library and future planning:

- a) including observations of how students and others are using the spaces in the library
- b) asking clients about gaps in service
- c) involving students in developing innovative ideas for space
- d) ask Faculty members about their vision for the library

Recommendation 2: It will be important to be informed by the work undertaken in recommendation IV-1. However, our observations and evidence from other institutions suggests that quiet study space is often at a premium and highly desirable. At the same time, there appears to be increased demand that should be substantiated with the work in IV-1 for spaces that promote collaboration such as a Discovery Centre or digital innovation lab.

IV-2a: Subject to the findings in IV-1, create improved silent study space - considering more use of TEK booths that preserve quiet study while offering the ability for podcasting and collaboration etc.

IV-2b: Subject to the findings in IV-1, create more collaborative space such as a discovery centre or digital innovation lab with enveloping services.

Recommendation 3: We did hear some feedback about room for improvement in terms of physical accessibility within the Library. Accessible washrooms are not available on every floor. There were concerns raised about the height of desks and tables and the impact of lighting and sound for individuals with visual and auditory impairments. As the library is a place for everyone, there needs to be ongoing considerations about how to make it more welcoming, inviting, and safe for everyone.

IV-3: Conduct an accessibility audit of the facility, including considerations related to the height of desks and tables, readability of signs, and impact of lighting and sound.

Recommendation 4: The Library provides many services for students but these are not always used and the blame is attributed to insufficient promotion. Conducting a review of student-facing services would not only help with prioritization but would potentially be an opportunity to increase external visibility. One suite of services which was very successful and appeared to be used heavily were those related to lowering the overall costs to students. There is further opportunity to expand Open Educational Resource initiatives and to continue to promote and support Open Access, an area where the campus already acknowledges the leadership of the Library.

IV-4a: Consider conducting a review of student facing services to better understand student needs, to prioritize allocation of scarce resources and to gain the opportunity for increased external visibility.

IV-4b: Continue to support Open Access initiatives and expand the support for Open Educational Resources (OERs).

Recommendation 5: While our focus has primarily been on facilities and spaces there are also opportunities to expand or change the suite of services supporting students. The Library has a robust offering of traditional library services as well as some innovative offerings done in partnership with other units on campus such as the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Teaching and Learning, etc. The Library also offers some specialized activities such as those associated with the Indigenous Art Collection. They also offer student employment and work experience. However, as one looks toward the future there are additional opportunities that are often overlooked that are within the realm of student experience. This might include shorter term placements such as in the past - in archives and art; but there might be other opportunities for student employment and experiences - e.g., digitization, software enhancement and development.

IV-5a: Consider working with faculty partners and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to create rich opportunities for students to engage at a higher level with library related technologies, projects, and collections for the mutual benefit of the students and the library.

IV-5b: Explore the potential for making research projects and experiential learning initiatives an ongoing program.

V. Research Services

Much of the focus of the meetings with the review team were on support for undergraduate students and faculty members in the classroom, yet the library should also be viewed as a strategic partner throughout the research lifecycle, supporting researcher success and research impact by managing research resources and infrastructures and boosting scholarly visibility. It was acknowledged that the Library was the primary and significant voice in support of Open Access. While the connection with research and researchers has become stronger in recent years there is opportunity to expand and deepen these connections particularly in light of impending federal developments related to requirements for article deposit arising from funded research and research data management and research data deposit.

Recommendation 1: Expand and accelerate the suite of advanced research services provided by the Library and librarians.

V-1: Continue to build-out the in-kind and at-cost services the Library can offer to researchers as part of their grant-funded projects (e.g., RDM, PIDs, metadata, spaces, knowledge versioning, preservation, etc.)

VI. Collection Stewardship & Discovery

This fiscal year the university took an important step towards supporting the ability of the library to provide sustainable access to key research resources by building inflationary costs into the core university annual budget (like accounting for the cost of hydro or building supplies).

Recommendation 1: While 3% is significant, it does not meet the actual inflationary increases of research resources. The annual forecasts in the [EBSCO Serials Price Projection Report](#) have proven to be

an accurate prediction of collections inflation and is used by other similar institutions in projecting serials inflation requirements.

VI-1: Annual inflationary increases for acquisitions from FY 2027 onwards should be more closely aligned with the [EBSCO Serials Price Projection Report](#) (see page 3 of the 2026 EBSCO report).

Recommendation 2: It was not clear as to the extent that active collections management was practised on a regular and ongoing basis. Not only does the environment and landscape of information resources change, but faculty needs and use of information changes as well in response to changing complement, research opportunities and transdisciplinary scholarship. A large scale review of user needs and collection development practices can be very insightful in aligning resources and shifting academic needs.

VI-2: Ensure collection development directly mirrors shifting academic needs so that scarce resources are appropriately aligned with a future focus in supporting teaching, research, and scholarship.

VII. Community & Professional Engagement

As a “soft landing point” for the university, the library is a vital bridge between university and the broader public, enriching community engagement and helping to raise the profile and articulate the value and impact of the university broadly, at a time when higher education is under attack. The library serves as one of the ‘front faces’ to the community, enhanced through hosting events.

The library, and specifically library staff, have been excited to work with partners, such as Faculties, departments, and other units (e.g., University Press) to host events (e.g., book launches). While these events highlight the library and bring people to the library, the somewhat opportunistic approach has raised sustainability questions.

Recommendation 1: The Archer Library would benefit from a more comprehensive strategic plan for events hosted in or by the Library. While there are many events held in the Library it is not clear as to how some of these events advance the core mission of the library. A focus on strategic events could be more efficient and effective rather than repeating events that while popular might be unsustainable given staff and time constraints. It would be important to connect this strategic plan to a Fund Development Plan to leverage community contacts and engagement.

VII-1a: Engage in strategic planning for events hosted in and / or by the library. Part of the planning could consider the library's capacity to host events and determine the purpose of the events and their relation to the library's mission.

VII-1b: Ensure that a detailed external communications strategy accompanies the Strategic Events Plan.

VIII. Financial Sustainability & Infrastructure

UBC Library assistant Eleanor Crumblehulme's recent analogy succinctly captures the essential role that libraries provide even during fiscal constraint: "cutting libraries during a recession is like cutting hospitals during a plague."

During the two days of meetings, no one questioned the value of the Archer Library. Rather, it was clear that one "can not have a university without a library" and the library has been "doing more with less", specifically less budget and fewer staff. While this approach continues to benefit the university, the environment of being "undersupported and underinvested in" is not sustainable. An example of the unsustainability is the lack of investment into capital projects with the Library, with the aging infrastructure impacting the safety and quality of the learning and research environment. Financial investment should come from the University as part of broader goals under the new strategic plan, and could also be part of a larger capital fundraising campaign.

Recommendation 1: Currently the Library receives about 3.3% of the University's annual operating budget, ranking 11th in Canadian comprehensive universities; while 3.5% would increase the ranking to about 7th – alongside Concordia and Wilfred Laurier. Given the institutional aspirations stated in *Together We Serve* the Library will be pressed to respond effectively.

VIII-1: Protect the Library from further budget reductions and create a multi-year plan to restore funding to at least the level of 3.5% of the annual University operating budget

Recommendation 2: As noted previously, libraries are often an area that sees significant collection and financial contributions in a capital campaign and at other times. Whether the Library is included in a

capital campaign or not, there are significant opportunities for fund development. Often Alumni and other donors want to make a more general contribution that affects all students across the institution such that the Library is a prime target for these potential donors. In other similar universities, libraries often represent a significant opportunity. These might provide new naming opportunities for spaces within the Library, and engage members of the community who have not been donors in the past. The University should see the potential for the Library in the various development campaigns.

VIII-2a: Engage with University Advancement to explore the potential for attracting new donors that would support a variety of programs and projects in the Archer Library.

VIII-2b: Create a strategic development plan for the Library, identifying a pipeline of donors, strategies for moves management, and appropriate training for the next Dean and key librarians and staff members.

Recommendation 3: The Archer Library has been very successful in obtaining donations of archives and art and other special collections. Best practice at other similar institutions includes a requirement to see financial donation to support storage, conservation, and other services (e.g. digitization). While not always possible and in some rare instances collections are accepted without an accompanying donation, there should be a clearer process and understanding of the financial impacts of stewardship.

VIII-3: Build a clear process to request financial support for archival and other collection donations.

Recommendation 4: All Universities are challenged with deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure. Archer Library is somewhat unique in that it is an architecturally significant facility which poses additional challenges. However, it would be prudent as a library of the future to engage in some future planning so that the extent of the issues and opportunities are documented.

VIII-4: Work with an external space and facilities planner to create a phased, Ten Year Master Facilities Plan for the Library to optimize spaces for learning and research, while also identifying and addressing deferred maintenance.

Conclusion

Overall, the Committee agreed that the Archer Library is a very well run library that has achieved more than expected given its resourcing and size. It has shown significant leadership on campus and beyond in key areas such as Artificial Intelligence socialization, forging collaborative partnerships, innovative service offerings that connect the library to the larger community, incorporating Indigenous world views, and in adopting a very student focused orientation. While we have many recommendations, they are to make a good library even better; more future-focused as the “library of the future” and as such, best able to respond to *Together We Serve*. Some of our recommendations would require new resources or reallocation of existing resources but we have suggested revenue generation, cost saving, and prioritization strategies.

The primary tension identified in this report is the gap between the Archer Library's high ambition to leverage its established potential and its structural vulnerabilities. The library is a cornerstone of the academic enterprise, and it has a critical role in student success and wellbeing; research excellence and innovation; institutional resilience and efficiencies; and, community understanding and engagement with the university's mission.

“Together, We Serve” looks ahead to 2035, envisioning the University of Regina as a place to “learn, discover, build, put things right, and innovate as one unified institution in a period of profound change.” This vision is simply unattainable without sustained investment in and support of the library, which is positioned to take a central and activating role, leading and supporting, as required, the overall vision.

The *University of the Future* – the University of Regina's future – is intimately intertwined with the *Library of the Future* – the Dr. John Archiver Library and Archives.