

NYU 21st Century Library Study

Objective

To help the Libraries evolve physical space and services to better address current and future needs of faculty and graduate students. Results focused on key strategies for addressing current needs, processes and approaches for anticipating future needs, and creating an environment where rapid change and experimentation are possible.

Methodology

With the assistance of a management consulting firm, Katzenbach Partners, LLC (KPL), the study included:

- interviews and focus groups with 65 members of the NYU community including 50 faculty members (selected by deans as leading researchers) and graduate students across a wide range of disciplines;
- a broadly scoped literature review by a team of consultants and librarians to assess relevant trends and practices;
- iterative planning sessions with a core and extended team that included faculty members, librarians, academic administrators and consultants.

Disciplines covered included:

Anthropology, Applied Psychology, Art and Art Professions, Biology, Computer Science, Culture and Communication, East Asian Studies, Economics, Education, English, Fine Arts, History, Interactive Telecommunications, Journalism, Linguistics, Middle East/Islamic Studies, Music, Music Technology, Neural Science, Nursing, Physics, Politics, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Spanish.

Summary of core findings

In light of recent radical changes to scholarly work, it is easy to overlook a key component of scholarship that is only becoming stronger: the desire among scholars to feel that they are part of intellectually stimulating and energizing communities. Key dimensions of the research environment that libraries need to address explicitly include surroundings, community, stimuli and process. Each needs to be viewed afresh in the context of a 21st century environment for research.

Researchers across all disciplines, *including the humanities*, are no longer tied to the physical space of the library. (Except for archives and special collections.) They function in a world of e-resources, virtual tools and free choice of where to work physically. Their expectations for access and process are shaped by the commercial sector and the Web. Community, collaboration, stimulation and communication are core elements of their research environment and they seek ways to gain and enhance these elements. Across disciplines, there are widely differing expectations of the roles of the library and the librarian and openness to new roles for the library as “connector” to people, to resources and to tools.

(over)

Strategic implications

- improve spaces, in the library and throughout campus, for scholarly work
- create more spaces and mechanisms for inspiration
- enable collaboration and connections within and across disparate disciplines
- make the discovery and research process more efficient and more powerful
- expand services beyond traditional conceptions of the library

Key messages

- change faster
- readjust to be an organization that learns continually:
be bolder, innovate, experiment
- use faculty expertise to understand trends and possibilities
- invest more in the online research process (adapt new Web technologies)
- keep renovation moving in a positive direction for students, who are the main users of library space
- communicate (two way) in new and more ways about what the library has become and is becoming

For a written report of the study, see:

<http://library.nyu.edu/about/KPLReport.pdf>