

The Libraries' Substantive Role in the Internationalization Efforts at the University of Colorado Boulder

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In its Flagship 2030 Strategic Plan, the University of Colorado (CU) articulates as its long-term goal of building a truly international university – “a place that exemplifies diversity, intercultural understanding, and community engagement.” Over the past ten years, the campus has strongly endorsed the concept of internationalization and has made great efforts towards implementing international activities and initiatives that follow the blueprint for internationalizing CU. However, studies and experience show that, across the country, academic libraries are often left out of campus internationalization efforts.

CU Boulder Libraries (“the Libraries”) have a long history of supporting internationalization efforts in research, curricula and student services, including building foreign language collections, supporting research and study abroad, and providing services for international students. This paper examines areas where the Libraries are engaged in internationalization activities, suggests future enhancement in these areas and proposes a deeper understanding of the extent to which the Libraries can participate in campus internationalization efforts.

Globalizing the Curriculum

Through collaborations with library colleagues and disciplinary faculty, librarians engage with curricular activities to share global perspectives through inclusive pedagogical methods. The Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defines information literacy (IL) as, “The set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.” The Library and Information Science field endeavors to teach IL, which UNESCO states as “a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations.” Librarians interpret these ideas and translate them in the classroom through interactive teaching methods and engaging content.

Instruction librarians prepare and deliver instruction that is responsive to student and faculty needs. One area of particular interest to faculty is educating students about plagiarism and academic integrity. The American Library Association Code of Professional Ethics, the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, and the literature of the Library & Information Science field support teaching all information consumers about the economic and intellectual value of information. Librarians understand that information ethics are experienced through various sociocultural lenses, and as practitioners we are positioned to interpret and teach information ethics in the context of the legal constraints and cultural norms of the United States.

Instruction librarians encourage lifelong learning and critical thinking in safe and open instructional environments. We highlight diverse materials during IL instruction lessons to increase global awareness among all students. Whether instruction is tied to a course, part of a

new student orientation, or provided during a consultation, librarians teach IL skills through inclusive pedagogical methods to bring diverse opinions and experiences into the discussion. Librarians also create digital resources that support students remotely, whether they are studying abroad or working off campus. Librarians often need to collaborate with disciplinary faculty to step into their classrooms. We propose the campus strongly encourage this type of collaboration through curricular standards or assessment processes.

Internationalizing Collections

Global research trends require knowledge of and access to materials from other countries, and we recognize our role in supporting university global initiatives and international research collaborations. Librarians develop and maintain a diverse collection of resources and build infrastructure that provides access for all users. The choices we make in what to purchase affects the level of access that our community has to global information resources. We should be globally minded in where we allocate university resources to insure that our collections and subscriptions reflect a multicultural world and student body. Additionally, the Libraries participate in interlibrary loan efforts with other institutions to share and borrow collections so our users have increased access to information nationally and internationally. We propose the libraries continue to advance this service and enhance the borrowing partnerships, especially with overseas libraries.

Open and digital scholarship platforms like CU Scholar ensure that the research at CU is shared with anyone with an internet connection worldwide. In turn, the CU community also benefits from open access initiatives that support sources of knowledge beyond just the Global North. Open and digital scholarship librarians provide instruction in digital technologies that enable building and interpreting knowledge in new ways with new audiences. Open and digital scholarship provide a vision that supports the future of access and discovery.

International Student Services

CU Libraries have built a culture where “every student is OUR student; we invest in their success.” Librarians are charged with supporting student success. Both research and observation suggest that the international population on campus faces major academic, social, and cultural challenges, such as communication obstacles, unexpected academic practices and expectations, different learning systems, as well as unfamiliar resources. Many aspects that are critical for supporting international students’ success fall within the purview of the Libraries. We assist students in adjusting to different academic environments, incorporating new learning strategies, and conducting scholarship within their academic disciplines. Librarians understand the unique needs of international and English Language Learners (ELLs) from a broad cultural perspective and we offer sustainable outreach programs to support our students, including:

- Library orientation and tours
- IL instruction specific to international students
- Research process and plagiarism workshops
- Library research guides
- Customized research consultations
- Collect and provide access to materials for ELLs

In addition, the presence of international students on campus remains largely a question of generating revenue rather than a way to enhance the intercultural learning of all students. For CU students, unless study abroad, their international experiences are disconnected from other aspects of the educational process. The Libraries want to create opportunities to expose all CU students to the unique skills and knowledge that international students hold. To that end, the Libraries allocate space and funding for student programming such as Speed Friending, the International Photo Contest, and the Talent Show. These programs allow international and domestic students to connect with each other and the global community, to explore cultural heritage in a safe environment, and to build and renew their social capital. We propose enhancing investment in programming that helps integrate international students into campus life and, at the same time, offers our domestic students extraordinary opportunities to interact with others from different culture. The Libraries carry out the programming through collaborations with other campus offices such as the International Student and Scholar Services. Without such collaboration, the programming could not have been successful. We must strengthen our current collaborations with various campus units and seek out new partnerships for student-centered programming.

Improving Intercultural Competencies

In the context of internationalizing CU Boulder, internationalizing the services the Libraries offer has become a topic of immediate relevance. As the heart of the campus, the Libraries provide services to support teaching, learning, and research with international dimensions, which requires high level of intercultural competence on the part of the Libraries' faculty and staff. Intercultural competence is described as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and ability that support the understanding and interaction with people of different cultures in authentic and positive ways. Current efforts in developing employees' intercultural competences in the Libraries need to be expanded and enhanced to ensure that the topic receives continuing investment. Suggestions include:

- Raising awareness on intercultural competencies through a variety of promotional methods.
- Bringing the Developing Intercultural Competence Workshop and other trainings to the Libraries and strongly encouraging all employees to attend.
- Promoting intercultural contact and friendship by creating spaces for people to mingle and opportunities for intercultural dialogues between groups.

The goal must be to support the development of intercultural competencies for all faculty and staff and to build culturally responsive services in the Libraries. With culturally competent faculty and staff, we will be better equipped to foster inclusive environments for students from different cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

The Libraries support the increasingly global research environment and are well positioned to support trends in campus internationalization. In addition to the areas of further engagement mentioned above, we propose strategic discussions through the Libraries' co-participation with campus-wide internationalization committees and initiatives. Additionally, the Libraries need a discrete plan for internationalization within our organization, which may require a specific

committee or task force that focuses on internationalization and is charged with internationalization activities. The Libraries have a foundational role to play in campus internationalization efforts. Through improvement in the areas mentioned, we hope to engage more with campus efforts and to increase our visibility as a key resource for our diverse campus community.