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The Libraries of the City University of New York

CUNY Council of Chief Librarians

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City University of New York

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ON BEHALF OF THE LIBRARIES of The City University of New York, we welcome you to CUNY. This briefing book is intended to provide you with some background to the CUNY library system, highlighting its accomplishments, as well as the challenges and opportunities that we confront in our endeavors to support the teaching, learning, and research mission of the University. Since this book is only an introduction, please do not hesitate to let us know if you have questions, ideas, or concerns about the CUNY libraries.

CUNY’s library system is a federation of 31 libraries and the CUNY Central Office of Library Services (OLS). OLS supports the University’s libraries so that they may better serve our students and faculty. We achieve this objective by giving oversight to systemwide purchasing and licensing of electronic resources, operating a systemwide library management system and centralized technical processing service, and funding technology and services for resource sharing.

Taken as a whole, the CUNY library system has:

- 250 faculty and professional staff
- 620 total faculty and staff
- Expenditures of approximately $34 million a year on faculty and staff
- Expenditures of approximately $13 million a year on information resources
- More than 9 million print volumes, several hundred thousand e-books, and
- A collection of electronic journals and databases supporting more than 23 million database searches annually

CUNY’s libraries, like all libraries, are subject to market trends. The issues we face include disruptive technological changes, publisher consolidations, and developing digital collections while making strategic investments in print collections. Despite these challenges, the University makes sound investments in library collections, services, and personnel. Our librarians are members of the faculty and participate fully in college governance and collegewide committees, and in the same tenure and promotion processes as discipline faculty. CUNY library faculty are active scholars, recognized internationally for their research and innovative practice.
SUPPORT FOR CUNY LEARNING, RESEARCH, AND SCHOLARSHIP

CUNY's Master Plan states that a “robust library system” is one of the “hallmarks of an outstanding 21st-century education,” necessary to advance the University's mission to “maintain and expand its commitment to academic excellence.” In support of this mission, the libraries serve both local users and faculty and students from all CUNY campuses. Whereas local services and collections are formed and assessed by libraries and college chief academic officers, CUNY-wide library services and resources, including many technology services, are governed by the Office of Library Services in consultation with the Council of Chief Librarians and other library constituencies. The Electronic Resources Advisory Committee is an example of this kind of close cooperation. The committee, consisting of representatives from all CUNY libraries, advises the University Dean for Libraries and Information Resources and the Council of Chief Librarians on system-wide information resource purchases.

CUNY libraries are open to all CUNY students, faculty, and staff, and each library provides network access to all CUNY members, regardless of their affiliation. An intra-CUNY loan service enables borrowers from one campus to request titles from another CUNY library to be picked up at any CUNY library of their choice. This service is extremely popular with CUNY students and faculty.

UNDERGRADUATE SUPPORT

CUNY librarians focus a significant capacity of their talents on teaching information literacy — a complex set of critical thinking skills that enable an individual to locate information, and use it effectively and ethically. Information literacy helps students build their self-confidence in decision-making, so that they can be empowered as independent learners and assume their places in today's competitive marketplace. Information literacy instruction is offered in a variety of courses that are as diverse as the institutions they serve. At Borough of Manhattan Community College, students attend one-hour information literacy sessions, tailored to their research projects. At LaGuardia Community College, students enhance their information literacy skills in the college’s new liberal arts First-Year Experiences course and in “InfoCity,” an urban studies course. Hostos Community College offers a Spanish-language information literacy workshop for its largely Hispanic student population.
Information literacy underlies the learning goals for students to master in any discipline. To that end, CUNY has established a common set of information literacy learning goals and outcomes for students to achieve by the time they have completed 60 credits so that CUNY students transferring from one campus to another will possess a correlated set of skills. We are currently working with discipline faculty to develop instruction for upper-level information literacy competencies so that discipline faculty can “co-own” the instruction with library faculty. This is being accomplished through several strategies, such as “embedding” librarians within a class to provide support for students. Embedding is a relatively recent outreach strategy, in which the librarian delivers customized instruction based on the needs of the class. LaGuardia Community College, for example, has embedded a librarian in its paralegal program, and librarians teach one-credit of some three-credit courses in the college’s learning community program.

Increasingly, CUNY librarians are playing a crucial role inside and outside the classroom. All of our colleges offer research workshops, which librarians conduct in the library or in the classroom. Many librarians go beyond this. They are teaching one- or three-credit information literacy courses on campus and in the information studies minor program at Baruch College. The Brooklyn College Library Café offers more than 250 technology workshops every year on a variety of software packages and tools. These workshops are open not only to all Brooklyn College faculty, staff, and students, but to the entire CUNY community.

CUNY’s libraries support the University’s historic mission of access in many ways. Beyond collections, services, and instruction, our libraries try to level the playing field by facilitating students with access to technology. Many libraries have technology loan programs which enable students to borrow tablets, laptops, e-readers, graphing calculators, and other technology that may not be available at home or elsewhere on campus. OLS also works with the CUNY Budget Office to allocate a textbook fund administered by each campus library to help defray the escalating costs of textbooks for students, and to make other investments to support the curriculum.

Prospectively, CUNY libraries are focused on partnering with discipline faculty in the area of open educational resources (OERs). Open content and open access textbooks are instructional resources that can be used, reused, often remixed and customized under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others while ensuring that authors retain copyright to their work.\footnote{http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources.} We have developed a proposal for a pilot program to incentivize CUNY faculty to adopt OERs instead of high-priced textbooks, which if successful will save CUNY students about $4.7 million over three to four years.
GRADUATE SUPPORT
Library support for master’s level students is distributed among the CUNY Graduate Center, School of Journalism, and the senior colleges. Similarly, doctoral students are supported by the Graduate Center, and increasingly at the senior colleges, as doctorate-granting authority is extended beyond the Graduate Center. Moreover, as nearly two-thirds of CUNY’s doctoral students have teaching responsibilities as adjuncts or teaching assistants on other CUNY campuses, they also have access to the library resources at the college at which they are employed.

CUNY benefits immensely from its close proximity to and relationship with the New York Public Library. CUNY doctoral students and faculty are extended borrowing privileges at this center of scholarship by presenting a CUNY photo ID at an NYPL service desk. CUNY graduate, doctoral, and faculty borrowers affiliated with NYPL may also apply for 120-day borrowing privileges from New York University and Columbia University, as both universities partner with NYPL in the Manhattan Research Library Initiative, a lending program for faculty and graduate students. NYPL also receives direct state aid to acquire materials in support of CUNY’s graduate programs.

FACULTY SUPPORT
CUNY libraries support our faculty through a blend of technology, collections, and other services to enhance their research and teaching. In the coming months, the libraries will be launching a discovery service that will enable researchers to search across multiple database platforms at once. At other universities where such services have been implemented, use of electronic resources has increased significantly. The libraries also support an online recommendation service, so that researchers can see what other resources have been reviewed by others whose searches match their own.

CUNY librarians have been at the forefront of the open-access movement. We continue to accomplish important work in hosting seminars and workshops to inform faculty on where to publish their work, the distinctions in types of open access, intellectual property, and other pertinent issues. In response to an open-access resolution by the University Faculty Senate, the Office of Library Services will be moving forward with its plans to implement an institutional open-access repository that will serve as a public site for CUNY scholarly output, and through its collocation, enable the University to widely disseminate the collective efforts of CUNY scholars.

In Spring 2014, the Graduate Center launched CUNY’s first iteration of an institutional repository using the Digital Commons platform. The center will populate the repository with current digitized theses and dissertations. Librarians are currently working with faculty to post works to the repository, linking to CUNY Academic Commons online author profiles. Other colleges are expected to begin using Digital Commons soon.
COLLECTIONS
The Office of Library Services strives to provide electronic resources that support teaching and research across all disciplines. We are currently focused on addressing a need for CUNY-wide support in the STEM initiatives. The libraries have established a set of resources for which we would like to provide universal access to ensure that everyone at CUNY has equal access to library resources. Ideally, this will happen by means of an additional systemwide investment in our libraries. A full list of the systemwide electronic resources is to be found on the CUNY E-Resources page (at http://www.cuny.edu/libraries/j-and-r.html). It is worth noting that CUNY recently established a subscription for digital access to The New York Times for anyone with a CUNY email address.

In addition to systemwide electronic resources, each of the colleges invests in electronic and print collections that support their local needs. The level of commitment for library funding at the local level varies across the University, and as a result faculty and students are financed depending on the priorities of the college’s administration.

Many CUNY libraries maintain special collections and archives. Some work has been done to digitize these materials, but more focused investment is necessary to make these unique resources available to scholars across the world. Listed below is just a selection of the rich special collections of the University’s libraries:

- Alan Dershowitz Collection (Brooklyn College)
- Civil Rights Collection (Queens College)
- Crime in New York, 1850-1950 Images (John Jay College)
- Hank Kaplan Boxing Archive (Brooklyn College)
- Lincoln Center Institute Collection (Lehman College)
- Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art (Hostos Community College)
- Puerto Rican Print Collection (Hunter College)
- Robert L. Hess Collection on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa (Brooklyn College)
- Schreiber Collection of Rare Books in Social Work (Hunter College)
- Shirley Chisholm Collection (Brooklyn College)
- History of Staten Island, CSI Archives & Special Collections (College of Staten Island)
- Stuart Schaar Collection on the Middle East and North Africa (Brooklyn College)
- Subotnick Financial Services Center (Baruch College)
- Wasserman Trading Floor for real-time data resources for decision making (Baruch College)

STAFFING
Hiring patterns across our libraries over the past five years have remained flat or have decreased, while the demand for services and the number of patrons has risen. Consequently, there exists a growing gap between service requirements and our capacity to effectively meet them. A recent survey of chief librarians across the system identified several areas in which additional investment in library faculty and staff will increase capacity and enable us to build toward becoming a world-class library system. The anticipated investment required is about $5 million.

Beyond hiring new faculty and staff, it is critical to provide opportunities for employees to renew their skills. In our rapidly changing technological environment, the need for continuing professional development cannot be overstated. Librarians across CUNY have availed themselves of many professional development opportunities at the local, national, and international level. They are also eligible for special reassignment leaves, and many librarians have used this opportunity to advance their scholarship or develop new skills. Prospectively, we have identified several significant areas in which further professional development is necessary for library faculty and staff. These include: assessment and evaluation; data curation, analytics, and visualization; digitization and metadata standards; instructional design and technology; leadership; pedagogical practice; project management; open access and scholarly communication; and social media and other emerging technologies.
FACILITIES
At a time when much of the content provided by libraries is digital, the brick-and-mortar library still remains an important component of the college experience. Perhaps more than any other building on campus, the library is emblematic of academic life. This is particularly true at CUNY, largely a commuter university. When students are not in class, they typically can be found in the library. The critical role of libraries at the University continues to be recognized by our ongoing investment in new buildings and renovations. Some of the more notable projects include:

**New Buildings** – Bronx Community College North Academic Building, Guttman Information Commons, Law School relocation to a new facility, and the School of Public Health/School of Social Work Library.

**Renovations** – Brooklyn College Library, City College Information Commons, Hunter Library (in process), LaGuardia Community College (upcoming), Medgar Evers Library (in process), and Queens Library.

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS
As libraries adapt to new uses and needs, collections, physical plants, and staff must evolve. More electronic resources should be acquired to support growing academic programs and research, particularly in the STEM fields. Existing print collections must be judiciously maintained. Materials unique to the campuses, including faculty scholarship, must be preserved. Buildings are hubs of activity, with students demanding more and varied technology-enabled group learning and study spaces. Staff, new and continuing, must be technologically savvy and constantly learning.

Specific challenges include:

- Hiring and retaining staff with the technological skills to move the libraries forward
- Making necessary investments in collections to support teaching and research, particularly in the STEM disciplines
- Continuous improvements in the information infrastructure of the University
- Process improvement for efficient procurement of electronic resources.

Over the past several years, library collections and staffing budgets have often been reduced while college budgets and enrollment have been increasing. An addition of $10 million to library base budgets systemwide is necessary for our libraries to remain competitive and provide collections and services expected of world-class universities, as well as to support student success, retention, progress towards graduation, and faculty research.

In closing, as stated in the CUNY Master Plan, “the University’s libraries — its information resources, services, and spaces — are and will continue to be essential to achieving excellence for CUNY [students,] faculty and staff across the spectrum of CUNY’s degree and research programs.” CUNY’s libraries have a long, distinguished tradition as an example of the integrated university. CUNY’s libraries share resources, collections, and technologies, across the campuses and beyond, through relationships in the city and state.

Chancellor Milliken, again, welcome to CUNY! We look forward to working with you to support your vision and leadership, and writing the next chapter of the world’s greatest urban public university.

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## CUNY Council of Chief Librarians, 2013-2014

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