

Appendix B: More information about the ‘why’ of the reorganization and how these issues are addressed in the plans now being brought forth

Preamble

The University Library’s 2025-2026 Reorganization Project has surfaced a wide array of issues for discussion and planning. Dean and University Librarian Claire Stewart articulated many of these high-level issues as the Project was being formulated and refined beginning in late 2025, in particular through library-wide presentations¹ and in the development and review of the Reorganization Project Team charter². A number of these issues have also been under discussion in or have surfaced through other recent activities, most notably the 2022 Academic Program Review, the 2021 Inclusion in Governance report, and the 2022 Library Council Implementation report. Some of these issues now being addressed also received attention as Dean Stewart formalized regular meetings of two administrative groups: the Senior Administrative Team and the Library Leadership Group.

Given the sheer number of diverse activities that library faculty and staff lead and engage in in general, in addition to the many new activities of the reorg, it is not surprising that maintaining clarity on the high level ‘why’s’ of the reorg has been challenging. Everyone is busy, the concepts and information can be dense, and the project has been underway for approximately 7 months. In addition, there have been refinements to the why’s and the scope and focus of possible solutions as the project was underway. This is not a project failure or a design deficiency; it is the outgrowth of an intentionally iterative process that has benefitted from the deep and engaged thinking of the entire organization. It should lead to better outcomes and a stronger organization if we can achieve collective clarity on the most beneficial ‘now directions’, as well maintain capacity to take up the array of follow-on work that was always going to be necessary, and which should shortly proceed, but now with a more intentional and clear set of leadership structures and focus. In a few areas of work, the model is being presented with a decision *not* to decide about organizational structures, often because other intensive activities are underway or planned to occur soon,

¹ See Appendix C for a more comprehensive summary of reorganization-related conversations.

² See Appendix C for a copy of the ReOrganization Project Team charter

need to take precedence and may themselves lead to additional future change, or just to balance overall capacity and manage change fatigue.

High level whys and how the proposed structure addresses the issue

Address gaps or reduce/eliminate redundancies in library-wide leadership responsibility

- Research services and programs: prior to this reorganization activity there was no clearly articulated library-wide authority for many of the Library's key research support services, including services as specialized as evidence synthesis and as broad as subject librarianship and all of the functions within. These will all now operate under the general authority of the AUL for Research and Academic Engagement (tentative title). Given the complexity of some of these functions, additional leadership articulations will likely be appropriate: for example, the heads of disciplinarily focused units (HIAS, Funk/ACES, Math+Chemistry, etc.) may work together as a focused council of leaders, likely with some direct faculty liaison participation, to oversee and develop subject liaisonship as a library service. There are likely also natural connections to conversations about divisions, which is *otherwise intentionally left out of scope for this reorganization* and is a matter deserving future attention³, ideally during a future formal shared governance refresh project, in particular given the significant divisional role in fielding faculty representatives for promotion/tenure and other library-wide faculty activities.
- Teaching and learning leadership: prior to this reorganization activity there was no clearly articulated library-wide responsibility for supporting or leading teaching and learning programs, including those carried out by subject liaisons (course-integrated instruction in particular) and those that are co-curricular or linked to broader campus teaching and learning initiatives (workshops, intensives with graduate students or faculty, CITL collaborations, etc.). These will all now operate under the authority of the AUL for Research and Academic Engagement, and most under the specific leadership of the new head of the Teaching and Student Success unit. Course-integrated instruction is a highly discipline-specific function, so care is needed to ensure participation and program design that is responsive to this. The new Teaching and Student Success unit will not directly oversee subject-based

³ As a practical matter, however, it is worth noting that the proposed unit structure does not necessarily have a significant impact on the current divisional structure, with the exception of the Area Studies division. The other units could, arguably, continue to operate within their current divisions, as the proposed combinations don't cross those lines (except for IAS as noted).

library instruction, but will play an important role in supporting and planning such activities and their components (Library-wide learning outcomes planning, maintaining and sharing expertise in the science of teaching and learning, teaching communities of practice, etc.), as well as in representing this role in strategic conversations internally and externally.

- Reference and information services leadership: many units and type of employees across the library play a significant role in reference and information services, but currently only the Reference Management Team (RMT) serves as a coordinating body, with no clear leader or reporting line overseeing it as a distinct function. The new RIAS unit will assume this role, under the general authority of the AUL for core operations & services. This is not intended to disband or disrupt any good work taking place in the RMT or other collaborative bodies, but it lays essential groundwork for future services and planning with clear lines of authority and responsibility.

Reduce number of administrators/unit heads and focus on efficiencies

No currently separate departmental libraries will close, be renamed, or experience service reductions as a result of this reorganization. However, some currently separate departmental libraries and other units will be combined into new organizational units where there is natural complementarity in disciplinary focus and/or functional role. At present, particularly in Main, there are a large number of public service points (10, not counting the Rare Books and Manuscript Library (RBML) and University Archives) reporting to a large number of separate units (8, not counting RBML or Archives), with very wide variation in approaches to general public services in terms of types and number of personnel, and no expectation that unit heads work together to coordinate internal processes or staffing philosophies, a general characteristic of units across the Library. Many unit heads have fewer budgetary and supervisory responsibilities delegated to senior staff (particularly at the Library Operations Associate level) than they ideally could, meaning they spend more of their time engaged in operational oversight issues than is ideal or necessary. This very large number of administrative decision-points adds complexity both in the units and in the central offices that support them (academic affairs, human resources, business and budget, etc.). A more efficient and equitable model is needed, and for public service staffing in particular, a strongly evidence-based model is needed. Although some of the proposed units could arguably have been grouped into much larger ones, based on the vigorous discussions about those models, a middle path has been chosen to lean into natural affinities, build on existing relationships, or just to create balance and lay groundwork for future growth. Examples include:

- HIAS – the Main Library HPNL, IAS, and LLL units already have much in common, work with many of the same disciplinary clusters in LAS, and occupy physical spaces that do or could lend themselves to greater cross-library oversight and coordination, particularly if all three move to the same floor with future space transformation, which has been a desired direction for many years. Reducing the number of decision points for public services staffing will translate into better efficiencies. Variations on this model have been under discussion for some time, and this specific implementation was proposed during the reorganization project by a large subset of the faculty and staff in the three units. Aggregating these three units makes a new one that is closer in size to other units, and with a wide array of possibilities for distributed leadership, in particular to senior faculty and staff in the unit. Size alone is not the only determinant of complexity, of course, and future work in the unit will uncover additional opportunity for streamlining and enhanced coordination. Assuming they all stay in the combined unit, two current unit heads will be able to step away from their personnel and budget responsibilities and that capacity can be redirected to core mission, such as possibly serving as library representative in specific external strategic settings. The third, assuming they become head of the combined unit, should benefit from upcoming work to closely study the opportunities to engage senior civil service staff at a higher level to assist with budget, personnel and facilities issues. Although reorganization does **not** imply closure or physical consolidation for any unit, in the case of these three units some collaborative oversight to reduce any service redundancies and/or to jointly assist (with the other Main units) in Main library operations is expected. This work has already been underway for almost two years through Main Library public service unit head discussions with the AUL for Operations and Services. That work can now accelerate to at least a working conclusion (say, to provide a model for 1-2 years of operations) and should expand to include more faculty and staff in the Library.
- Math and Chemistry: Although Math is currently in a temporary location, these two physical locations are near each other on the quad and have historically enjoyed a good degree of collaboration and connectivity. Nearer term planning should focus on whether there is sufficient personnel capacity in the combined unit given the size and research intensity of their disciplines they support. The current leaders of these libraries also have significant strengths in and are providing leadership in key areas including generative AI, open access, bibliometrics, and science policy, and conversations could include explorations of additional, above-the-unit leadership roles.
- Arts Library: The Ricker Library of Art and Architecture and the Music and Performing Arts Library both work with faculty and students in the College of Fine and Applied

Arts. The prior head of the Ricker library decided to step down from her unit head role while reorganization discussions were still underway. As with the other two units above, intentional conversations to ensure alignment with library-wide approaches, as well as to identify any additional opportunities for leadership below the unit head, will be important.

Provide greater clarity and support to leaders at all levels

In addition to the more specific leadership responsibilities now being articulated at the AUL and unit head level, an expanded concept of distributed leadership means that it happens at every level and that these leaders need structures to work in: clear capacity allocations (peer teams with dedicated work assignments, PGA or student support, access to IT capacity, funding for software or tools, etc.) and understanding where they are being encouraged and deputized to boldly lead, and where there is an expectation that they will bring issues back to the library, either for higher level leaders to assist, or to help continuously inform strategy and planning (ideally both). The purpose of the reorganization is not to heap all leadership responsibilities on unit heads, but to articulate a model for gradually narrowing distributed leadership from the AUL down to the leader of a focused activity or program. Articulating the specifics of this distribution (resources, time, oversight, coordination, etc.) will be unique to each unit and must necessarily involve the individuals doing the leading.

Respond strategically to significant reductions in personnel capacity

Over the last decade, the University Library's operations budget, which encompasses expenditures for all personnel, facilities, technology, and supplies (in other words, everything except the collections budget), has been almost entirely flat, from \$24.2M in 2016 to \$24.3M in 2026. Taking CPI into account, this means the operations budget had decreased by more than 25%, and the library faculty and staff has shrunk by approximately 20%. Most of this decrease occurred through attrition, and changes in personnel levels not necessarily occurring based on an intentional strategy. By the time Dean Claire Stewart arrived in 2023, almost all units reported being understaffed, while also experiencing significant ongoing upward pressure on all costs, in particular for salaries and wages. This Reorganization does *not* seek to further reduce personnel costs through cuts, but to reduce the capacity devoted to separately administering units that could be managed differently.

Other things that were considered but are not now being proposed for implementation

Organizational structures related to outreach and community engagement

Although this is an essential function in the library, it is a highly distributed, diffuse, and diverse activity lacking a clear, agreed-upon definition and requiring further study to understand where capacity and leadership are best directed. There is also a very active community of practitioners who work together in formal (outreach & engagement committee) and loosely structured ways. Some of this work is also (or should be) closely tied to emergent university strategy and evolving interpretations of the focus of our DEIA work. Many ideas were surfaced through reorganization that deserve attention, but were divergent in a number of ways, and which surfaced hidden complexity. Rather than commit to a new organizational structure, more study and intentional focus are needed. AUL for Operations & Services Mary Laskowski will lead this future study at a time to be determined; Director of DEIA Victor Jones is likely to be an active partner to the AUL, and future organizational change recommendations may be developed.

Organizational structures tied to a wide array of digital programs and services

Depending on which individual is speaking and what issues are top of mind, the Library's digital strategy might be the thing focused on collections digitization, the array of programs touching on digital methods and scholarship, a growing focus on open science and scholarship, or all of the above and more beyond. The library has significant strengths and deep historic investment in this area, but more time and intentional study is needed to determine future work priorities and any additional organizational structure changes. Many ideas were surfaced through reorganization that deserve attention, but were divergent in a number of ways, and which surfaced hidden complexity. Significant changes to the Scholarly Communication and Publishing and Research Data Services units were studied and discussed, but are ultimately too intricately tied to the work of other units and deserving further and more focused planning. This work is pressing and such a visioning and planning activity should begin as soon as possible, ideally in the fall semester of 2026.

Much more significant consolidation and rearrangement of units

- **Merging RBML and Archives organizationally** – although this is a model some of our peer research libraries have, given the scale of change underway to prepare to move into the new ASC building, as well as the very active work to build a coherent, shared approach to services in a shared space, organizationally merging these units would be premature. It may be considered again in future.

- **Creating larger units with bigger aggregations of disciplinary or functional oversight** suggest consolidation possibilities: a single science libraries unit with multiple locations, for example, or an arts & humanities unit similarly structured. Although these models exist at peer libraries, given the scale of change and particularly the very large physical span of responsibility and personnel involved, a more focused set of consolidations is envisioned to start, with heavy on the Main library. Once the third AUL has been brought on board and after a period of adjustment and study with the current more modest set of combinations, this issue will be revisited.
- **More significant separation of disciplinary/subject specialist liaison programs from core public/information services focus.** Although a number of peer libraries have a version of this model (Minnesota, Tennessee, Michigan), the current approach is chosen to work on it in a single location with a large number of units – the Main Library—and revisit once the third AUL has been brought on board and some lessons learned. One assumption that has been mentioned does deserve attention here, however: there is no expectation that such an approach would separate faculty employees and staff employees into different organizational structures. Both types of employees are essential to all such approaches. Information and access services are, in and of themselves, dynamic core functional areas with copious potential research questions to explore and areas for both faculty and staff to innovate and contribute.

Other aspects that will need additional focus and care:

- **One unit, multiple physical locations** – this is not a new model at Illinois (University Archives has distributed physical locations, as does GELIC, Funk/ACES, Preservation Services, and Collection Management Services) but there are security and public service considerations that deserve care and attention when a single organizational unit has responsibility for multiple locations. The expectation is that a greater focus on distributed leadership will be essential in doing so, including a close look at opportunities with Library Operations Associates (LOAs), the most senior in the Civil Service library series. The seven library units that currently operate separately both physically and organizationally will be reduced to three organizational units, while retaining the seven separate physical locations.
- **Equity and workloads** – as with any change, care must be taken when adjusting responsibilities to be fair, responsive to strategic priorities and disciplinary needs, consider eliminating or streamlining what we can, and to take individual strengths into account as much as possible. We also need to bear in mind that we are realigning our work and resources (as we do periodically) to help account for

changes on campus and loss of personnel over time, and this need does not end with the current phase of reorganization. It is a normal and ongoing process to revise position descriptions as programs change, a process that is now comprehensive across all Library personnel with the new annual faculty evaluation process. Ideally, such changes are explored with the direct participation and contributions of the individual in the position.

- **Map Library and GIS support in the Library** – a number of possibilities exist but some key questions deserve more focused study and conversation. For the time being, Lynne M Thomas has accepted temporary unit head responsibility for the Map Library, working with the existing staff and with Jess Hagman and Sanga Sung, who have stepped in to assist with teaching and other related work. Some directions are also dependent on funding. For example, the Library has requested specific support from the university to expand GIS personnel, and early conversations about a collaborative, university-wide GIS capacity need attention and may have funding implications (i.e. generate additional funding to partly support expansion in the Library).