



# University of Colorado Boulder

2022 Program Review

University Libraries

Academic Review and Planning Advisory  
Committee Report

Approved

DocuSigned by:

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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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## Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the University Libraries was conducted in accordance with the 2022 program review guidelines. Self-study responses were prepared by the unit and checked by two ARPAC members specifically assigned as liaisons to the unit. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the self-study and from interviews and/or surveys with faculty, staff, and student unit members. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and meetings with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over March 14 and 15, 2022. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the dean, and wrote this report. Discovery process summary and external reviewer comments and recommendations are shared when relevant throughout this report.

## Past Reviews

The Libraries were last reviewed in 2014. ARPAC's recommendations emphasized the need for a strategic plan and suggested developing a mentoring program for tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty to help with tenure and promotion. Other recommendations included: develop a fundraising strategy, boost the Libraries' role in information technology, implement plans to build diversity, address internal climate issues, and develop collaborative strategies with other units to advance plans for a new special collections storage facility. The Libraries have since taken concrete steps to address these recommendations, as evidenced by their follow-up letters and the 2022 self-study. Specifically, the Libraries have successfully implemented a tenure-stream faculty mentoring program, developed two three-year strategic plans, implemented a recruitment initiative, improved diversity awareness, and strengthened relationships between subject specialists and the units they serve. Additionally, the Libraries partnered with OIT to establish the Center for Research Data and Digital Scholarship (CRDDS), which has made the unit the campus leader in providing access to information technologies for digital scholarship. Despite these successes, the Libraries still face challenges, particularly with regard to special collections storage and renovations. While the unit has developed a short-term solution, there is a critical support need to address underlying infrastructure issues that require both immediate and long-term attention.

## Unit Overview and Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Libraries is available on the website of the Office of Data Analytics (ODA) at <https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. ODA updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in October 2021, reflecting the state of the Libraries as of the academic year (AY) 2020-2021.

The Libraries are an essential university unit and work collaboratively with all other academic units to contribute significantly to CU Boulder's educational objectives. As the Regional Federal Depository Library (RFDL) for Colorado and the first National Preservation Steward for the Government Publications Office's Federal Information Preservation Network, the Libraries also play a crucial role in serving the state and the nation. In view of its importance to the university's identity and its service to the state and national interests, ARPAC believes that the Libraries deserve the university administration's highest level of attention and support.

## Disciplinary Context

The University Libraries are a well-established and vibrant premier Research 1 library system whose “passionate talented staff and many excellent programs” (ERC) serve students and faculty on the CU Boulder campus as well as the larger Boulder and Colorado communities. The Libraries self-study describes the priorities of the unit as follows: “to connect people with the highest quality information and expertise seamlessly, empower the complete student, engaged citizen, and lifelong learner, create inspiring physical spaces, and engage our global and statewide communities to celebrate and preserve cultural heritage.”

Since the Libraries' most recent strategic planning process in 2019, the unit has undertaken a significant organizational restructuring, which resumed in August 2021 following a pandemic-induced hiatus. These structural changes include a more streamlined governmental organization with fewer hierarchical layers to respond more efficiently to the rapidly changing needs of the profession and the campus community. The expansion of CRDDS, which offers library patrons a full range of data services and support, has been a significant component of the restructuring process.

The Libraries are members of several prestigious organizations, including the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, the Greater Western Library Alliance, the Association of Research Libraries, the Center for Research Libraries, and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. In 2020, the unit ranked 49<sup>th</sup> out of 124 member institutions in the Association of Research Libraries, a significant improvement over their rankings of 73<sup>rd</sup> in 2014 and 53<sup>rd</sup> in 2019 that is attributable to an increase in faculty salaries and the campus' ongoing commitment to addressing materials cost inflation.

However, despite these accomplishments, the CU Boulder Libraries' composite ranking among AAU public peers is not as high as the ranking bestowed on the library faculty's research and scholarship (ranking 25<sup>th</sup> out of 35 U.S.-based AAU public peer institutions). Low staff numbers seem to be a contributing factor to the 49<sup>th</sup> place ranking, as discussed later in the report. Nevertheless, ARPAC is interested in determining whether other key improvements could contribute to an increase in this particular ranking.

## Research and Scholarship

According to the external reviewers, the Libraries' faculty are highly productive scholars based on their publications. Between 2015 and 2020, library faculty members produced 905 publications, with 147 undergoing peer review. In addition, approximately 43% of library faculty research output consisted of non-refereed presentations on the local and national level to share ideas and network with potential collaborators. The self-study also cites a 2017 article that ranks the University Libraries fifth overall in peer-reviewed article publications among U.S. academic libraries from 2003 to 2012, further highlighting the unit's research productivity.

The self-study distinguishes between internally focused research, which addresses issues related to library services and technology, and externally focused research, which examines how library patrons interact with information, and also points out that faculty in the Libraries are practitioner-researchers who engage in research that enhances library operations and services. Many faculty engage in interdisciplinary research and closely collaborate with other units across campus, particularly in areas such as systematic research reviews, pedagogy, and digital scholarship. Research and scholarship by library faculty are closely aligned with what the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Research Planning and Review Committee has identified as top trends in academic libraries, which include topics such as learning analytics, artificial intelligence, and open educational resources.

## Collaborations

The Libraries have established numerous notable collaborations that significantly raise the profile of the unit. Collaborations include local, national, and global affiliations with academic institutions, other academic research libraries, storage facilities, and collections. Among those collaborations listed in the self-study are partnerships with the open-source community Future of Libraries is Open (FOLIO) and Google Books, which allows Google to digitize thousands of unique books in the Libraries' collections.

A close collaboration with NCAR was established in 2018 with the goal to facilitate exchange activities and to share and leverage resources and expertise in regard to data management, data storage and sharing.

As previously mentioned, the unit is a member of the Online Computer Library Center, the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA), the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, the Center for Research Libraries, and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) among others. It also collaborates with the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in running the modern storage facility PASCAL, which serves faculty and students across the CU system.

## Campus Context

The University Libraries is not a degree-granting unit. However, it does support undergraduate and graduate students in significant ways. The unit provides research assistance, reference services, and student employment opportunities. Libraries faculty and staff serve as recitation instructors for a First Year Exploration course that helps first year students in the Program for Exploratory Studies to transition to life at CU Boulder. In addition, the unit lists 7 courses regularly taught by library faculty, from general introductions to information literacy for undergraduate students to more specialized courses on research methodology for graduate students. Liaison faculty members work closely with individual departments on integrating Libraries instruction into curricula across campus; they provide course specific research guides and instruction sessions designed to enhance pedagogy.

The Libraries' collections and services are especially essential to graduate student academic success and retention. CRDDS has created new learning opportunities for graduate students, including the interdisciplinary Digital Humanities Certificate, which prepares graduate students to create, utilize, and leverage digital technologies for public outreach and engagement. Libraries faculty members teach the foundations course for the certificate, DHUM 5000: Introduction to Digital Humanities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Libraries played a vital role in providing remote access to research materials, which was crucial particularly for graduate students but also for the entire campus research/scholarly community.

## Strategic Vision and Planning

The Libraries have a strategic plan that covers the years 2020 to 2022, but the pandemic caused delays in its implementation. The strategic plan was developed in line with the CU Boulder commitment to being a “leader in addressing the humanitarian, social, and technological challenges of the 21st century”.

The plan has four main objectives:

1. Seamlessly connect people with the highest quality information and expertise
2. Empower the complete student, engaged citizen, and lifelong learner
3. Create inspiring physical spaces
4. Engage our global and statewide communities to celebrate and preserve cultural heritage

The strategic plan aligns each of these goals with a number of initiatives focusing on technological accessibility of resources and information, diversity and inclusion, partnerships and collaborations, integration with campus curricula, fundraising, and the creation of a master plan for Libraries’ spaces.

To improve user experience and restore pre-pandemic services, the unit envisions hiring six new faculty members, ten new staff members, and 26 additional FTE student workers. These additions will help the Libraries build on their expertise in experimental film, provide effective consultations and instruction, create accessible information systems and platforms, and support first-generation and underrepresented students.

The unit sees the need for hiring a software developer as part of its ongoing commitment to improve open-source technical solutions and provide robust, remote access to digitized content and the FOLIO library platform project.

In addition to hiring, the Libraries require infrastructural improvements such as an environmentally controlled special materials center for the unit’s Rare and Distinctive Collections (RaD - a joint initiative with the Natural History Museum), and a new PASCAL storage bay. These needs are discussed further below.

## Governance

In November 2021, the Libraries revised its faculty handbook and bylaws and approved these changes by a vote of 34-0-1. These revisions uphold the governance structures established in 2019 and 2020, including the introduction of a libraries vice faculty chair (LVFC) position. The LVFC position chairs the executive committee, which advises the dean on policy and budget matters and appoints ad hoc committees and task forces. The executive committee members also make up the Dean's Evaluation Committee, which evaluates library personnel annually and the dean every five years. Other positions, such as the Boulder Faculty Assembly liaison and chairs of various committees, were also affirmed in the updated handbook and bylaws. The revisions also clarified criteria related to tenure and promotion to full professor and updated teaching professor reappointment and promotion policies to align with campus guidance. The updated policies and procedures aim to encourage more associate professors to submit materials for promotion to full professor and to provide better guidance to current full professors as they participate in evaluations. The self-study mentions ongoing updates to grievance processes in the bylaws and updated documentation and procedures related to evaluating faculty career merit.

## Inclusive Excellence

The Office of Data Analytics' academic year 2020-21 unit profile showed that 77% of the Libraries' tenure-stream faculty members identified as women. Additionally, 16% identified as non-white and 9% identified as members of underrepresented<sup>1</sup> racial/ethnic groups. Over the previous five years, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of women faculty members and in the percentage of faculty members who identified as belonging to an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. However, there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of non-white faculty members. The self-study reports that the Libraries' non-white faculty percentage closely mirrors that of the overall field.

The Libraries' staff demographics are relatively balanced in terms of gender, with women holding approximately 61.2% of positions. However, only about 16% of staff members identified as non-white, which is lower than the campus average. The self-study noted that both faculty and staff demographics have remained relatively stable over the years.

The Libraries have undertaken a number of actions to improve inclusivity, both for the faculty and staff of the unit and for the community they serve. For example, according to the self-study, “the Libraries’ Diversity and Inclusive Excellence Working Group (DIEWG) became the Dean’s Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, which provides leadership by devising short- and long-term strategies, making recommendations, and developing activities that promote cultural competency.” The unit successfully hired a DEI assistant dean to lead initiatives that recruit, cultivate and retain a diverse workforce. In consultation with the Diversity Search and Outreach Program Manager, the unit has been able to improve their hiring processes by tweaking their position announcements and their standard wording.

The unit has also applied for deferred maintenance funding to address ADA accessibility of several library spaces. They have added new gender-neutral and accessible restrooms and a mindfulness room in the Norlin facility.

## Unit Culture

The external reviewers noted in their report some degree of frustration among Libraries personnel with the organizational changes and with a seeming lack of transparency, which was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous ARPAC review had also cited poor internal communications as an issue for the Libraries to address. Despite making various efforts to address this issue, detailed in the self-study, it appears that poor communication and transparency issues are lingering.

Furthermore, the 2020 Campus Culture Survey, which was also referenced in the self-study, showed that incivility is a significant concern for Libraries faculty and staff members alike. In response to this, the external reviewers noted that “faculty and staff expressed a deep desire to be innovative in how they treat and take care of one another.” The external reviewers observed that the Libraries Executive Leadership Council is aware of existing tensions and is taking steps to address these based on faculty and staff feedback. As a result, the reviewers urged the development of a more concrete action plan to improve the unit’s overall culture.

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<sup>1</sup> ARPAC notes that it can sometimes be complicated to have consistent, shared terminology for protected class identity groups. In the context of this report, we use the term “underrepresented” to refer to individuals or groups that have been historically marginalized or minoritized within U.S. higher education. Although national data sources often use the term “underrepresented minority (URM)” to combine people who are Black, Latine, and Native American, ARPAC acknowledges that the term “minority” is contested and diminishing.



## Faculty and Research Personnel

According to the Office of Data Analytics (ODA) unit profile from AY 2020–21, the Libraries had a total of 41 full-time tenured and tenure track (TTT) faculty members (including the dean) and 9 instructor-track faculty. The self-study conducted in Fall 2021 indicated that there were now 56 faculty personnel, comprising 41 tenure stream faculty members (including the dean), nine non-tenure track faculty members, and three temporary faculty. While the self-study notes that this was an increase of 9 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty since the previous ARPAC review, it also notes that 2 faculty members were due to retire at the end of the 2021 calendar year.

As mentioned above, the self-study expresses a need to hire 6 additional faculty members in upcoming years. The self-study does not label desired fields for these new hires, but the strategic plan clearly expresses priorities for future growth in terms of research and librarianship expertise.

The Libraries' efforts to mentor, retain, and promote faculty members have borne fruit in recent years. Efforts to improve retention have focused on three major areas: improving faculty salaries, improving the onboarding process, and formalized mentoring. The support of the campus and the efforts on the part of the unit to rectify salary inequities are especially notable. Effective February 2019, starting faculty salaries were standardized to have new minimums and to differentiate starting salaries for assistant professors from those of instructor-track faculty members.

Current faculty salaries were also increased to mitigate salary compression issues. In addition, the onboarding process has been improved to provide new faculty members with clearer information, and a structured faculty mentoring program has been in place for seven years. The program has produced positive outcomes, including improved overall retention of faculty and an increase in the number of associate professors from 13 in November 2013 to 22 in November 2021. The Libraries have also promoted several faculty members, resulting in an increase in the number of full professors from three in Fall 2020 to seven in Fall 2022, including the dean.

## Undergraduate Education

As mentioned earlier, while the Libraries do not have the authority to confer degrees, the unit plays a crucial role in CU Boulder undergraduate education. Library faculty and staff members are involved in teaching information literacy and research methods courses ranging from 1000- to 3000-level. Additionally, librarians provide essential services such as making educational materials accessible to students, responding to research inquiries, supervising undergraduate research projects, and presenting to student groups. These activities are integral to the undergraduate educational experience and are evaluated during performance reviews, as well as reviews for reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

## Graduate Education

The Libraries act as a major partner in graduate education, just as they do with undergraduate education. The faculty teach 5000-level courses that equip graduate students with research skills in the various fields. Perhaps their most important contributions worth mentioning are one-on-one consultations, workshops, and course-integrated library instructions all of which contribute to excellence in research practice with graduate students. As mentioned above, the new CRDDS consults with graduate students across campus on topics such as data workflows, finding data, tools, methods, and publishing. In addition, the Libraries have established the new graduate certificate program in digital humanities through the CRDDS.

## Postdoctoral Training

Although the Libraries presently have no postdoctoral trainees, ARPAC wonders whether postdoctoral training might serve as a potential pipeline for strategic hiring in order to increase the number of personnel as well as improve diversity of personnel in the unit. The unit might explore the Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship for Diversity as a possible avenue.

## Staff

According to the ODA profile for AY 2020–2021, staff personnel in the Libraries consisted of 154 non-student employees (including faculty and the dean) and 125 student employees. The self-study reports that the unit had 43.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) university staff and 44 FTE classified staff as of Fall 2021.

University staff positions require professional expertise acquired through education and/or training in library stewardship, media production, etc., whereas classified staff positions perform more routine library services and operations tasks. At the time of the previous ARPAC review, the Libraries reported having deliberately increased university staff by 27.75 FTE and decreased classified staff by 47.5 FTE. In the years since the 2014 review, the Libraries has decreased its staff FTE numbers by 19.25 due to the higher salaries associated with university staff jobs as opposed to classified staff jobs.

The same period saw a drop in student employee numbers, from 46 FTE in 2014 to 20 in 2021.

The FTE reduction and retirement incentives are identified in the self-study as contributing to an enduring personnel shortage that is affecting the unit's operational efficiency and that might be partly accountable for the Libraries' 25th place ranking among its 35 public AAU peers. Echoing the self-study's call for more staff and student employees, the external reviewers noted a need for increased personnel as among their major recommendations. The unit's low staffing level is affecting basic operational workflows, as well as the work of the faculty who are struggling to keep up with their research portfolios as they fill in for staffing gaps.

The unit has implemented various measures to improve staff morale and working conditions. One of the primary initiatives is making salary adjustments. According to the self-study and external reviewers, compensation has increased due to campus initiatives. However, it is unclear how the Libraries staff salaries compare to the campus compensatory index and the Libraries' AAU peers. Considering the local cost of living, the external reviewers suggested that there is still scope for improvement.

In addition to salary adjustments, the Libraries' reorganization process integrated staff into Libraries governance and business-practice groups (termed guilds, pods, communities of practice, and committees), and the Libraries recently instituted a Professional Staff Development fund. As part of the self-study process, the unit surveyed staff; some reported "reorganization fatigue" and a lack of opportunity for promotion as further challenges for the unit to address going forward.

One specific staff need expressed in the self-study is for a software developer to assist with the burgeoning work of the CU Scholar research repository. ARPAC urges the Libraries to work with the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and possible other partners such as ODA to fill this staff need.

## Budget

The Libraries' continuing budget derives mostly from general funds. The largest share of the continuing budget goes towards materials expenditure, amounting to 48.14% of total budget during fiscal year (FY)

2021. Salaries and benefits for faculty, staff, and student employees are a close second, representing about 45.7% of the total. The small amount remaining goes toward information technologies, other equipment, and faculty development.

Although the university has provided support to keep up with increased materials costs, the budget allocation has not kept pace with the unit's personnel and equipment needs, a persistent issue noted in past reports. ARPAC again recommends that the university invest in increased staffing resources to enable the Libraries to achieve its teaching, learning, and research goals.

To increase budgetary resources, fundraising is an option. The self-study suggests partnering more directly with university advancement personnel to carry out greater fundraising efforts. As is, the Libraries receive support from the College of Arts and Sciences advancement team, but this shared support is inadequate for the unit's needs.

The external reviewers, noting that campus advancement personnel are currently in a state of reorganization under new leadership, urges the Libraries to “undertake some internal practices and infrastructure building that will position the Libraries to utilize campus infrastructure when Advancement is ready,” including “increasing overall communication and marketing about successes, building strong stewardship practices at the curator and librarian level[,] and leveraging annual appeals.”

ARPAC cannot discern whether grants and endowments received by library entities (e.g., archives and special collections) count as part of the Libraries' general budget. It would be appropriate to account for those funds since they support unit operations. Similarly, the unit should continue to explore and encourage its faculty and staff to pursue grants, which can usually supplement student employee salaries.

## Space, Infrastructure, and Other Support

The Libraries house the largest library collection in the Rocky Mountain region, with more than 12 million books; periodicals; federal, state, and international government publications; audio-visual materials; microforms; maps; manuscripts; papers; photographic images; films; rare books; ephemera; and electronic resources. This collection requires both on-campus and off-campus facilities to accommodate its size and complexity.

While recent improvements have been made to update and modernize some of CU Boulder's disciplinary and professional libraries, the Norlin Library building still faces limitations and technical challenges, particularly in terms of providing faculty and staff with adequate desk and reading spaces. The self-study highlights the need to reclaim space currently occupied by non-library-related units and offices in Norlin, which would significantly improve the unit's space situation.

The age of the Norlin building also presents a critical infrastructure challenge that requires a thorough review of the functional use of the building in light of the unit's needs, including a check of climate control systems in the vaults and storage areas that hold archival, rare, and special collections materials.

Additionally, there is a looming crisis regarding off-site storage, as the PASCAL facility is nearly full, and there is a need for a new storage facility for rare materials. Finally, the unit requires better support and communication from the Research and Innovation Office regarding grants administration, as the self-

study identified issues with obtaining grant speedtypes and notifying principal investigators about RIO actions. ARPAC urges RIO to address these problems promptly.

## Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Libraries and to the offices of responsible administrators:

### To the Unit and the Dean:

1. Investigate the factors that contribute to the Libraries' ranking among its AAU public peers and explore how to better showcase the excellence of the Libraries' functions, services, and faculty work in ways that might improve that ranking.
2. Focus on improving the unit's culture, including communication and transparency, and develop clear action plans to address any persistent issues.
3. Continue the good work of mentoring faculty on the promotion ladder.
4. Develop a comprehensive staff employment plan. A part of that planning process, consider rebuilding the budget for work-study students.
5. Collaborate with other campus units, such as OIT and ODA, to hire an IT specialist/software developer for the CU Scholar institutional research repository.
6. Encourage and support library faculty and staff to pursue grants to supplement student employees' FTE.
7. Work with the vice chancellor for academic resource management to assess the Libraries' budgetary and infrastructure needs and develop immediate and long-term solutions.
8. Make internal changes in marketing, stewardship, and annual appeal practices related to fundraising and advancement initiatives, as recommended by the External Review Committee.
9. Working with the vice chancellor for academic resource management, review the functional use of the Norlin building in light of the Libraries' space needs and consider recommending the reallocation of spaces occupied by non-Libraries entities, if appropriate.
10. Working with the executive vice provost for academic resource management, identify ways of extending the PASCAL facility to address emerging materials storage issues.

### To the Executive Vice Provost for Academic Resource Management:

11. Work with the unit leadership to assess the Libraries' budgetary and infrastructure needs and develop immediate and long-term solutions.
12. Work with the unit leadership to review the functional use of the Norlin building in light of the Libraries' space needs of the Libraries, and consider reallocating to the Libraries of spaces occupied by non-Libraries entities, if appropriate.
13. Work with the unit leadership to identify ways of extending the PASCAL facility to address emerging materials storage issues.

## To the Vice Chancellor for Research:

14. Work with the Libraries to identify and resolve concerns hindering the smooth administration of grants held by Libraries faculty and staff within RIO.

## Required Follow-up

The dean of the University Libraries shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2024 and one due on the first of May 2026. The follow-up reports are to be addressed to the provost and other central campus leadership and shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The relevant central campus leadership and the provost will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year’s recommendations. Relevant central campus leaders will submit follow-up reports due on June 1, 2024, and the provost will submit a follow-up report due on June 1, 2026.