



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Victoria University Office of the Chief Librarian 2023-2024 Review – Executive Summary

In keeping with the By-Laws of the Victoria University Board of Regents, President Rhonda N. McEwen commissioned a review of the Office of the Chief Librarian to be completed in the Fall of 2023. The review was intended to advise the President on the overall effectiveness and health of the Office of the Chief Librarian in its various functions, to assess the initiatives that have been developed during the Chief Librarian's term of office, and to identify the major opportunities and challenges facing the libraries – the E. J. Pratt Library and the Emmanuel College Library –over the next five years.

Angela Hamilton, Chief Librarian UTSC Library, University of Toronto and Susan Senese, Former Director of Information and Instructional Technology and Associate Librarian, Research, and Information Technology, , University of Toronto Mississauga served as external reviewers. Their review report is based on two days of interviews conducted in November 2023 with librarians, staff, faculty, and other stakeholders from across Victoria University and the University of Toronto.

The reviewers' report focused on several areas including Leadership, vision, and management; Digitization; Collaboration with other Victoria University departments as well as the Friends of the Library; Collaboration with the University of Toronto Libraries and other library systems; Delivery of student support services; Readiness to support new models of undergraduate education including outreach and instruction.

Several common themes emerged from the interviews including an overwhelming admiration for the services provided by the E.J. Pratt and Emmanuel College Libraries' staff and librarians. Additional themes identified included continued emphasis and pride in the highly valued Special Collections of the libraries and related digitization work, recognition of the need to pursue workflow reviews for potential efficiencies to build capacity for additional goals and services, and the desire for the deepening of partnerships and collaborations both within Victoria University and across the University of Toronto Libraries system.

Internal and external stakeholders complimented and admired the leadership, commitment, and collegiality of the Chief Librarian and the work that has been done with the library since the last review. There is also a sense that the Chief Librarian is forward looking and eager to set and reach new goals.

Strong leadership is fundamental to the operations of the libraries. This includes the prioritization of librarian and staff efforts, planning for digitization projects and collections, and leading changes related to library spaces to respond to the call for more people space for study and learning. Librarians and staff are required to reflect and collaborate on planning in response to Victoria University's Strategic Framework and the multi-year Implementation Plan. This planning will inform decisions and strategic directions relative to the opportunities and challenges faced by both libraries and ensure that future decisions and plans closely align with those of university.

For example, Victoria University's Strategic Framework specifically articulates a direction to "invest in an online presence that complements our physical spaces; adopt new technologies for connecting; and identify leading edge infrastructure to enhance learning experiences." The reviewers noted that achieving progress in these areas is highly dependent on information technology skills, expertise, future forward planning, and strategic allocation of Information Technology (I.T.) resources. One strategy that was expressed would be to review the strengths of various I.T. teams (e.g., U of T's Information Commons, Vic U's ITS (Information Technology Services) group, and Vic U's Library IT team) capitalizing on skill sets and expertise to drive efficiencies and improve support through further consolidation and service realignment.

Another pillar of the Strategic Framework is "Outstanding Academic Offerings," which are supported by outreach and instruction through Pratt's Help Desk and Reader Services. Programs such as the syllabus service and information literacy sessions were highly praised. Faculty articulated these programs would have the potential to be expanded if there was greater awareness of the offerings and additional resources for delivery.

This speaks to the need to ensure that future decisions and plans closely align with those of university and to take the time to reflect on the future place of E.J. Pratt and Emmanuel College as 21st century libraries— to expand, refine and even discontinue current activities, services and programs while laying plans to embrace new and future offerings. This inclusive and collaborative planning may also serve to break down any silos that might have been created due to the pandemic. Planning will also inform needed professional development areas for staff and librarians, and/or identify entirely new positions to close gaps and underpin future services.

Recommendations to support this planning and future stages of Victoria Universities' libraries are as follows:

- Review and update data collection and statistics to ensure they are capturing appropriate measures to meet the libraries' assessment needs.
- Consider the libraries' role in supporting the realization of the Victoria University's Implementation Plan under the Strategic Framework.
- Review existing workflows to ensure staff and librarians are positioned to meet emerging library and University needs. This includes the review of student positions in the library, and in particular, front-line processes.
- Review the roles and potential collaborations between the E.J. Pratt Library I.T. and the Victoria University, UTL and U of T I.T. functions and services.
- Consider potential collaborations between Victoria University library staff and UTL staff, examining workflows, technologies, and strategies related to collection development.
- Consider the future of the Friends of the Library including ways to engage new and soon to be alumni.
- Assess the existing collections and physical spaces to ensure they are meeting the needs of students.