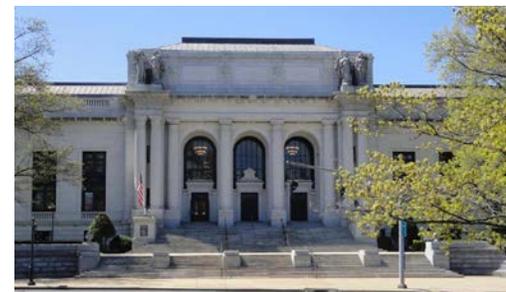


Advancing Collaborations, Continuing to Thrive

2020-2023 Strategic Framework



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Connecticut State Colleges & Universities
Library Consortium



Connecticut State Colleges & Universities **Library Consortium**

Mission

The Connecticut State Colleges & Universities Library Consortium empowers its member libraries to collaborate in support of success, equity, diversity, social justice, and access to resources that spark creativity and intellectual enrichment.

Statement on Diversity and Social Justice

The consortium advocates for social justice and inclusivity. The consortium promotes and celebrates equity and diversity within its member libraries through open and accessible collections, services, spaces, and hiring practices.

Preamble

The Connecticut State Colleges & Universities (CSCU) Library Consortium includes the libraries of Connecticut's twelve community colleges, four state universities, Charter Oak State College, and the Connecticut State Library.

The dedicated and collaborative professionals and staff at these libraries hold specialized educational credentials encompassing information management, teaching and learning, and information and digital literacies. They apply these credentials broadly to address the evolving technological, social, and academic challenges of the twenty-first century. Through this expertise along with inspiring spaces and rich collections, the consortium's libraries enable their communities to thrive.

This document presents a framework for how the CSCU Library Consortium will advance collaborations and continue to thrive in the future. It presents four Strategic Directions and provides a summary of the consortium's history and current contexts.

Strategic Directions

Breaking Down Barriers

Contribute to student success and reduce inequity

Partnering for Success

Deepen and broaden collaborations across the consortium's membership and beyond

Coordinating Collections and Powering Discovery

Maintain and further develop robust and accessible collections

Advocacy through Assessment

Help collect and apply assessment data to advocate for member libraries



Breaking Down Barriers

Contribute to student success and reduce inequity

The consortium strives to remove barriers that stand in the way of student success and a more equitable future. Through their collaborations, the consortium libraries are already playing a critical role in helping their communities to surmount these barriers, but there is more work to do. Drawing on skills, values, and resources unique to the field of librarianship, the consortium has the opportunity to better coordinate and align the efforts of its member libraries.

The consortium will:

- Mobilize collaborations across the consortium libraries that empower their communities to develop the information and digital literacy skills to make informed decisions about privacy and enable lifelong learning.
- Apply an equity-lens to its activities. This lens will identify new opportunities and help ensure that the consortium thinks deliberately about its roles and responsibilities in support of equity.
- Engage in and sustain initiatives that maintain the consortium libraries' roles as leaders in efforts to reduce the costs of course materials and increase openness.
- Improve the diversity and accessibility of library collections and services.



Partnering for Success

Deepen and broaden collaborations across the consortium's membership and beyond.

The consortium's collaborative activities encompass the work of all library personnel, serve to strengthen its individual institutions, and are carried out in a spirit of trust, collegiality, and shared commitment to serving the growing needs of the libraries' communities. These activities occur not just within and among libraries but also with campus partners and other organizations with congruent goals and values.

The consortium will:

- Provide the structures of analysis, decision-making, and operations through which the consortium libraries scale-up collaborations to leverage the potentials of their personnel and systems.
- Pursue and sustain external collaborations that are viable, impactful, and in alignment with its mission.
- Enable personnel at the consortium libraries to grow and flourish professionally



Coordinating Collections and Powering Discovery

Maintain and further develop robust and accessible collections

Scarcities of funding and space make it increasingly difficult to build, provide access to, and preserve collections. Additionally, the nature of collection development is changing as libraries increasingly go about this work in a networked environment where collections are shared to maximize their impact and discoverability while reducing costs.

The consortium will:

- Optimize the ability of researchers and learners to search across the consortium libraries' collections and beyond, find and request what they need, and receive it quickly.
- Provide opportunities for consortium libraries to engage in collaborative collection development activities that reduce costs while still giving their communities access to the materials they need.
- Provide guidance to help consortium libraries to digitize, preserve, and provide access to archival and special collections and institutional research and data.



Advocacy through Assessment

Help collect and apply assessment data to advocate for member libraries

The consortium has vital roles to play in enabling assessments and being a conduit for showcasing the value, accomplishments, and evolving roles of its member libraries. Compelling narratives about the benefits that the libraries bring to their communities are given depth and power by assessments that map to the interests and concerns of key audiences.

The consortium will:

- Provide resources and expertise to help its member libraries to assess their impacts relevant to the outcomes that drive decisions and resource allocations.
- Promote the value of member libraries in ways that align with and reinforce these libraries' own advocacy activities.



History of the Consortium

The CSCU Library Consortium originated from the 2012 merger of Connecticut's colleges and state universities under the Board of Regents for Higher Education. Before the merger, there were strong library partnerships among the community colleges and among the state universities and State Library. The merger brought these two hubs of collaboration together under the CSCU Council of Library Directors, which governs the consortium and oversees its committees and working groups.

Following its formation, the Council presented the Board of Regents with a shared vision for library services. This document described "the potential for increased collaboration and improved service that the new organizational structure may provide" and identified initiatives to pursue.^[1]

Among these initiatives was the exploration of implementing a discovery platform that would allow for cross-searching of and broadened access to the consortium libraries' collections. After much deliberation, this initiative led to the Council's decision to merge their existing disparate systems



into one combined state-of-the-art integrated library information system to better serve their communities. In 2017 the consortium libraries went 'live' with Alma/Primo from Ex Libris. As a result, the libraries now have a shared infrastructure that facilitates operational efficiencies and creates new potentials for partnership. More importantly, these systems enhance library services by providing more consistent web interfaces and expanding abilities to search for, request, and share materials across all of the libraries' collections.

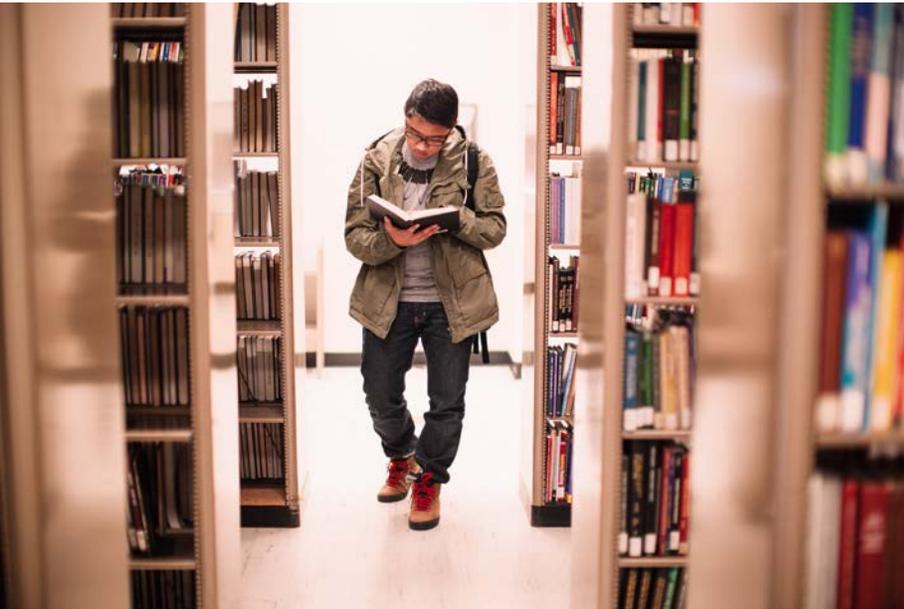
"...the libraries now have a shared infrastructure that facilitates operational efficiencies and creates new potentials for partnership"

It became clear to the Council that the consortium needed a full-time position of Program Manager for Library Consortium Operations. This position was filled in spring 2019 and provides added capacity for and leadership of the consortium's work. Also in 2019, the consortium continued its practice of holding semi-annual retreats. In these retreats, personnel across the consortium libraries networked, attended presentations, and discussed the future of their work together.

Current Contexts

The CSCU Library Consortium can only thrive through the success of the communities that its member libraries serve and partner with. This section describes challenges that these communities face and the roles that the consortium's libraries can play to help address them.

The communities served by the consortium libraries live in a complex and burgeoning



information ecosystem in which the boundaries between fact, opinion, and falsehood can seem increasingly uncertain. Literacy in this ecosystem requires the development of skills in the critical, adaptive, and ethical use and creation of information. As a report from the Community College Research Center states, library personnel are "instructional partner[s] and expert[s]" who are well positioned to empower their communities with information literacy skills.^[2] In the consortium libraries, this positioning is

reflected in the expertise of library personnel and the thousands of hours each semester that these personnel devote to working with students, faculty, staff, and other partners. The libraries connect their communities with relevant information and provide them with skills to evaluate and contextualize this information.

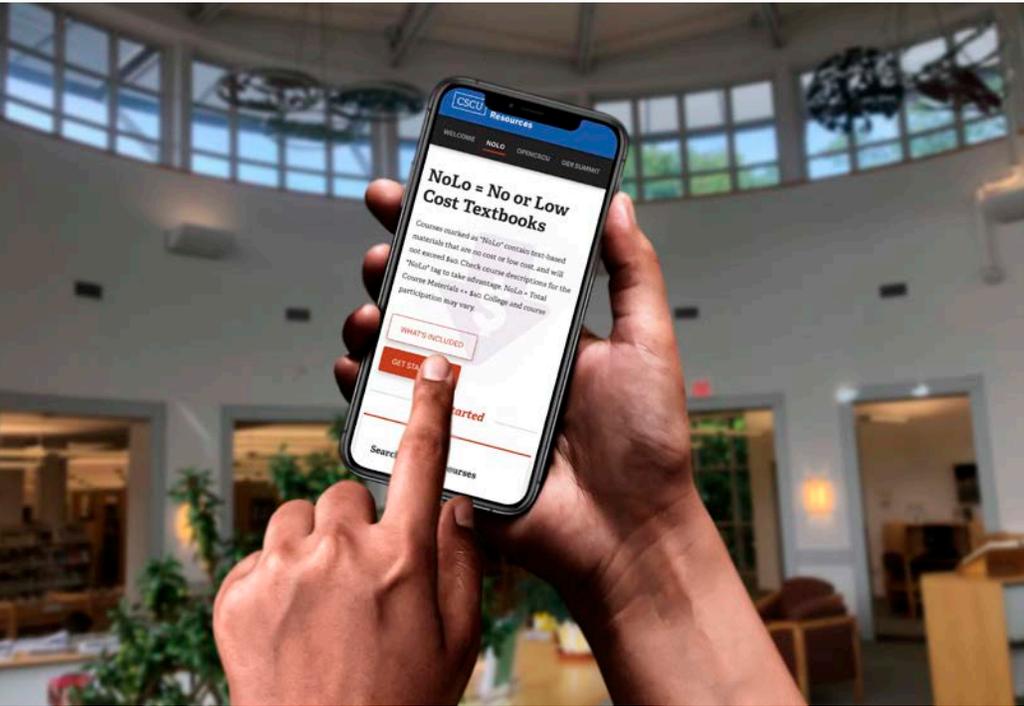
The communities served by the consortium libraries face obstacles rooted in discrimination, structural racism, systemic poverty, and accessibility-based barriers. These inequities result in groups who have been denied resources and support systems, an injustice that Black Lives Matter protests have powerfully foregrounded. In Connecticut, racial inequities are illustrated by the fact that we suffer from one of the country's highest postsecondary achievement gaps between white and non-white students.^[3]

"The communities served by the consortium libraries face obstacles rooted in discrimination, structural racism, systemic poverty, and accessibility-based barriers."

This gap is an indicator of the roadblocks that stand in the way of academic and career aspirations. Research shows that struggling students often turn to libraries for support,^[4] and the consortium libraries respond by striving to either meet students' needs or connect them with partners who can.

At an organizational level, the Board of Regents has decided to address barriers to student success through Students First, a plan to consolidate the State's 12 community colleges into a singly accredited institution in 2023. Included in the Students First plan are efforts to ensure that students complete their degrees and certificates and are empowered to enter the workforce, continue their learning through academic transfer, or pursue a postgraduate degree. While research shows transfer students to be highly self-sufficient, they are also stymied by challenges including "institutional barriers, feeling like they don't belong, and external demands on their time and energy."^[5] Other research shows that personnel at community college and state university libraries have important roles in positively impacting the experiences of transfer students,^[6] and existent partnerships across the consortium libraries suggest great potential for increased focus on fulfilling these roles.

"Data from 2018 suggests that OER adoption at CSCU institutions had so far resulted in student savings exceeding \$1.7 million."



Those who do meet their educational objectives are stymied by debt. Indeed, one study found that Connecticut graduates have the highest average student debt in the country.^[7] Open Educational Resources (OER)—free, openly licensed educational materials—offer one way to mitigate education costs while also increasing student retention and facilitating lifelong learning. Through the concerted and dedicated work of library personnel, educators, and technologists, CSCU institutions are

at the forefront of efforts across the country to advocate for and empower faculty to adopt OERs. Data from 2018 suggests that OER adoption at CSCU institutions had so far resulted in student savings exceeding \$1.7 million.^[8] Efforts at these institutions have included development of [OpenCSCU](#)—a website with resources supporting location and adoption of OERs—and #NoLo, a tag that enables students at participating CSCU institutions to easily identify course sections with OERs and/or other materials that will cost \$40 or less.^[9]

Advocacy for adoption of OERs is just one front in a broader international effort to block the commodification of education and scholarship through initiatives rooted in the principles of openness and sharing.

For example:

- The Open Pedagogy movement strives to give students greater agency by making them co-creators of curriculum
- The Universal Design for Learning framework removes educational barriers by offering students multiple approaches and strategies for learning
- The Open Access movement strives to make scholarship and research data freely accessible and re-usable online

"The consortium libraries are leaders in advancing initiatives rooted in the principles of openness and sharing."



The consortium libraries are leaders in advancing initiatives rooted in the principles of openness and sharing. For example, they educate their communities about the value and benefits of openness, and they expand their expertise by obtaining specialized training to help enable their communities to openly license resources.

Concurrent with their efforts to increase openness and sharing, the consortium libraries are working to safeguard privacy. Personal information is a valued commodity for corporate and governmental entities. In addition to

helping their communities to develop information literacy skills that lead to informed decision-making about personal information, the consortium libraries are licensing e-resource collections and managing patron data in ways that protect privacy.

The consortium libraries engage in the above-described efforts at a time when the field of librarianship is transforming. While libraries are retaining their fundamental roles as

repositories and access points for information, they have and continue to expand their boundaries to include roles centered on the creation and management of knowledge in new formats. For example, work is beginning to occur in the consortium to help equip



students with the technical expertise required to demonstrate digital literacies in software use and coding. The horizons of librarianship are expanding, new partners are emerging, and the consortium libraries are strengthening their ties with-- and in some instances providing leadership for--their institutions' educational technologists. Through these partnerships, the libraries are making new contributions to institutional missions by helping to ensure that instructors and students have the technologies and expertise required to meet

learning objectives in a variety of settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in libraries while foregrounding their importance. Throughout this crisis, the consortium libraries have rapidly adapted to provide remote services and modified spaces that ensure that the libraries meet the needs of their communities. Critical aspects of the libraries' adaptations occurred through consortial collaboration. For example, the consortium libraries partnered to share information, update interfaces, implement new services, provide training, and develop best practices.

But even as the consortium libraries adapt and expand their roles and partnerships, they are operating in an environment of scarcity.

Funding levels for personnel and services are flat or decreasing while the needs of their communities and the costs of their collections are only increasing. The consortium libraries are not unique in this dilemma, and national trends show that libraries are responding to scarcities by investing in increased partnerships such as collaboratively managing and providing access to collections.^[10] While the consortium libraries are already a part of these trends, a future of thriving will require that the libraries build on their partnerships in ways that scale to the scope of the challenges that they and their communities face.

"...even as the consortium libraries adapt and expand their roles and partnerships, they are operating in an environment of scarcity."

Methodology

At the foundation of this strategic framework are conversations that occurred at the January and August 2019 retreats for all consortium library personnel. These conversations concerned the future of collaborations in the consortium, and each of the retreats resulted in follow-up documents approved by the Council of Library Directors:

- The January retreat was followed by a [letter](#) to all consortium library personnel identifying strategic directions to guide the immediate future of the consortium
- The August retreat was followed by a [summary and analysis](#) of a “Strategic Conversations” session engaged in by retreat participants

In September 2019, the Council of Library Directors built on these activities by approving a scope and process for the development of a mission statement and 2020-2023 strategic framework for the consortium. Key parameters for the mission statement and strategic framework were:

- The consortium’s January and August 2019 retreats and member libraries’ recent assessment activities
- The missions, visions, values, and plans of the consortium libraries and their parent organizations
- Accreditation standards
- The values of librarianship

These plans were shared with the CSCU Academic Council (October 9) and, via webinars, all personnel in the consortium libraries (October 16 and 17).

A subcommittee of the Council of Library Directors then worked through an iterative process of drafting, gathering feedback, and making revisions. This work began in November 2019 and continued until August 2020, when the Council of Library Directors voted to adopt the mission statement and framework.

Following adoption, the Council of Library Directors will work to develop plans for implementation and assessment for the consortium’s work to achieve its strategic objectives.

Acknowledgements

The CSU Library Consortium is indebted to a number of external organizations whose strategic documents were significant influences. In particular, the consortium wishes to acknowledge the influence of and express thanks to:

- [California State University Libraries](#)
- [Indiana University Libraries](#)
- [University of Arizona Libraries](#)
- [University of California, Berkeley Library](#)
- [University of Connecticut Library](#)
- [Washington Research Library Consortium](#)

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