The Colby Libraries are central to Colby’s intellectual life and academic mission. This centrality is signaled symbolically by the placement and status of Miller Library as the signature building on campus. This symbolic centrality both creates and points to a functional centrality. In many respects, Miller Library serves as an intellectual crossroads for the campus. Students choose to do their academic work in Miller; several important disciplines have their offices in the same building as the library; meaningful faculty gatherings and workshops occur in Miller Library. The Colby Libraries (Miller, Bixler, and Olin) serve as important places where knowledge and ideas are preserved, discovered, synthesized, and created. As Colby seeks to assert and extend its position as a leading liberal arts institution with an “unwavering commitment to the humanistic disciplines and liberal arts more generally,” it is critical that the Colby Libraries be well positioned to support the intellectual life of the College both now and into the future.

Toward that end, the Library Planning Group was constituted during the 2015-16 year and given the charge to “develop an analysis of library programs and services needed to meet Colby’s educational mission and support academic and intellectual life on campus.” More specifically, the group was asked “to fully consider all facets of the library that are needed to meet our teaching, learning, and scholarship mission, now and into the future, and to investigate the implications for the long-term space needs of the library.”

Background/Context

The Library Planning Group conducted its work in the context of several years of community discussions about the Colby Libraries. Many of these discussions were prompted by a two-year renovation of Miller Library. Following years of student concerns about insufficient study space in Miller Library, the College undertook an extensive renovation of Miller Library. The goals of this renovation were to increase study space for students, to restore the historic reading room, to create working adjacencies that would improve service to both faculty and students, to create an “information commons” model that would easily connect students with both information and support, to establish meeting and workshop space, and to improve the entry sequence into Miller.

2 Lori Kletzer, “Message to the Campus Community,” October 6, 2015
The renovation also included the creation of a storage facility in order to allow the Library to continue to acquire physical collections into the future. The Library had reached full capacity for physical resources (e.g., books, bound periodicals, etc.) and was threatened with the prospects of either being unable to acquire new resources or having to discard parts of the collection in order to create space for new resources. The creation of a large storage facility allowed the Library to continue to acquire new resources without having to discard previous resources. Furthermore, the storage facility was built with sufficient capacity to allow the Library to continue to acquire at current rates for 40 years without having to eliminate previous collections.

The renovations took place in two phases, during the summers of 2013 and 2014. The first phase of the renovation included the construction of the storage facility, the relocation of books from Miller into the storage facility, the construction of the Information Commons space, and space for the Writers’ Center, experimental classroom, and conference room. The second phase of the renovation featured the redesign of the entry sequence to make it more welcoming than the previous version (in which the front doors led into a dark stairwell). The new entry sequence opened the lobby to exterior light through the front windows of the building and included a new Information Desk. The second phase also included the restoration of the historic reading room into study space—as well as the creation of additional student study space on the upper floors of Miller.

Following the first phase of the renovation, members of the Colby community expressed concerns about the removal of books from Miller, the renovations to the Library, and the process by which those decisions were reached. These concerns were expressed in letters, editorials, faculty meeting comments, and petitions. There were also a series of community forums in which these concerns were articulated. Through these various means, Colby community members emphasized the critical role of physical resources in supporting the work of teaching, learning, and scholarship. They also noted the value of serendipitous discovery that comes from browsing materials in the stacks and expressed concern that such serendipity would be lost (or at least reduced) by having books in the storage facility. They further observed a demoralizing effect produced by entering a library that felt as if it were “without books.”

In response to these concerns, the Provost charged the Library Committee to undertake an extensive review of the Colby Libraries in order to make recommendations for the future of the Colby Libraries. Recognizing the magnitude of the task, the Provost increased the size

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In fairness, others noted that the move toward remote storage of materials has been well established in academic libraries as an effort to preserve collections. Further, the Library provides daily delivery of materials to faculty offices upon request (whether from Miller or from the storage facility). Finally, the selection of which books were moved to storage was made after extensive consultations with departments and informed by usage patterns of the materials.
of the Library Committee by adding four additional elected faculty members. The Library Committee began its work in May 2014 and issued its report on May 1, 2015.\textsuperscript{4} The Library Committee emphasized the importance of a systematic program of information literacy; observed gaps with respect to staffing, budgets, and space; and suggested action with respect to those gaps.

In addressing the space implications, the Library Committee noted that “we lack the expertise to make detailed recommendations.”\textsuperscript{5} Instead, the Library Committee proposed “the creation of a planning group this summer for the Colby libraries similar to the planning groups for the new athletic center and the performing arts center.”\textsuperscript{6} The Library Committee proposed that the Library Planning Group be “a balanced and representative body of professional librarians, [elected] faculty, administration, staff, students, trustees, and alumni.”\textsuperscript{7}

The Library Planning Group and Gensler

Following the recommendation of the Library Committee, the Provost called for faculty elections to select four faculty members and two library faculty members to serve on the Library Planning Group. The full Library Planning Group was:

- Minakshi Amundsen, Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Campus Planning
- Suzi Cole, Scholarly Resources and Services, Sciences Librarian
- Kelly Doran, Assistant Director for Capital Planning and Construction, staff
- Tasha Dunn, Clare Boothe Luce Assistant Professor of Geology
- Clem Guthro, Director of Colby Libraries, \textit{ex officio}
- Bob Heath, Assistant Director of Customer Service and Administration
- Paul Josephson, Professor of History
- Lori Kletzer, Provost and Dean of Faculty, chair
- Jake Lester ‘18
- Lisa McDaniels, Assistant Director of Scholarly Resources and Services
- Adrianna Paliyenko, Charles A. Dana Professor of French
- Liz Paulino ‘18
- Jim Sloat, Associate Provost and Dean of Faculty, staff

\textsuperscript{4} In parallel with the Library Committee report, Elizabeth Leonard also authored a thoughtful and detailed document entitled, “The Future of the Colby Library.” Her report was informed by an extensive series of conversations with colleagues as well as her own research. Her report was posted along with the Library Committee report and was part of the materials that the Library Planning Group consulted in its work.

\textsuperscript{5} Library Committee, “Report of the Library Committee,” May 1, 2015, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
• Doug Terp ‘84, Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer
• Indiana Thompson ‘18
• Rob Weisbrot, Christian A. Johnson Distinguished Teaching Professor of History

In response to the need for external expertise, the Library Planning Group was aided in its work by Gensler, a planning and architectural design firm from Boston with significant experience working on academic libraries.¹ The Gensler team worked with the Library Planning Group to help facilitate discussions (both within and beyond the group), to gather and analyze data and facilities options.

Process and Findings

The Gensler team led a two-pronged effort. Along one prong, they facilitated a series of conversations among the Colby community in order to hear people's priorities for and satisfaction with the Colby Libraries. Along the other prong, they gathered and analyzed data about the Colby Libraries, peer institutions, and facility conditions.

Conversations with the Colby Community

Visioning Session (February 19, 2016): The Gensler team began by conducting a Visioning Session with the Library Planning Group in an effort to understand the different perspectives in the group and to begin to define the broad components of a vision for the Libraries. The conversation addressed Values and Mission, Behaviors and Pedagogy, Tools and Resources, and Community and Culture. From this robust conversation came the following shared beliefs about the Libraries:

• The job of the Libraries is to connect people to knowledge.
• We value all sources of knowledge—both books and digital resources.
• We recognize the particular value of librarians to help us navigate the changing world of information.
• We go to the Libraries to acquire information and to do our work—both individually and in groups.

Focus Groups (March 3-4, 2016): The Gensler team conducted a series of five focus groups (two with faculty, one with students, one with staff, and one with library staff). The format of the focus groups pretty closely followed the format of the Visioning Session. The findings from the Focus Groups were:

¹ It should be noted that this Library study took place at an earlier planning stage than either the athletic center or performing arts center studies. As a result, Gensler was contracted to help clarify the programmatic needs of the Libraries and to identify space implications arising from those needs, rather than to do architectural design work.
• The Libraries should be holistic and seamless, allowing people (a) to navigate between sources of information—physical and digital, (b) to do their work in different ways and times that make sense to them—sometimes alone, sometimes together, and (c) to bring the community together across disciplines—though not by co-locating the libraries.
• The librarians are critical to providing this seamless experience.
• Overall, the Colby community sees the Libraries as places for acquiring information, doing their work, and discovering knowledge.
• Faculty, students, and staff place different priorities on these activities in the Libraries. While faculty prioritize acquiring information in the Libraries, students prioritize the Libraries as a place to do their individual work.
• Within each group, there are differing opinions, driven by the discipline of study, previous experiences, and different ways of learning and pursuing scholarship.

Campus Survey (March 14 – April 4, 2016): In an effort to gather the broadest possible feedback, the Colby community (faculty, students, staff) were invited to complete a survey about their use of library resources and their satisfaction with the spaces in the Libraries. 348 people completed the survey, and the findings were:

• Regarding the use of the Libraries and its resources:
  o Students use Miller Library most frequently, followed by their use of digital resources.
  o Students use individual and collaborative study space more than they use either physical or digital resources.
  o Faculty use digital resources more frequently than they use the Libraries’ physical resources.
  o Faculty rely on librarians and ITS staff more frequently than students do.
  o All user groups use digital resources more than they use physical resources.

• Regarding satisfaction with the spaces in Miller Library:
  o Overall satisfaction with the Miller Library spaces is high.
  o Students report high satisfaction with the individual and group study spaces in Miller.
  o The comments noted more expressions of general satisfaction than of general dissatisfaction.
The most frequently cited sources of dissatisfaction were (a) unreliable technology / digital tools, (b) indirect access to books, and (c) lack of comfort (lighting, HVAC).

Informal Student Study Location Exercise: Following discussions about where students study, Jake Lester used campus maps to ask students where they study. Fourteen students participated, and these are the locations most noted by these students:

- Miller Library (11)
- Diamond (9)
- Pulver/Pugh/Spa (8)
- Outside (8)
- Dorm (6)
- Davis (5)
- Mudd (5)

In their comments, students noted that they choose different locations for different kinds of studying. With respect to Miller, many choose the Street and first floor for either group work or “ordinary” work such as reading. They choose the third floor for more focused study. All of the respondents identified multiple study locations. Though clearly not a representative sample, these students confirmed claims from the focus groups that students are very intentional about their study locations—and that they choose different locations depending on the different kind of work that they are doing.

Department Survey (May 9–17, 2016): Throughout the process of the Visioning Session, the Focus Groups, and the Survey, we heard repeatedly about the important differences between different departments and the ways in which they engage the Colby Libraries. While some of these important differences were articulated in the Focus Groups, we did not initially have a systematic opportunity for departments to respond. As a result, we developed a survey instrument for departments and programs to gauge the different needs and priorities at the department level, and 24 departments/programs responded to the survey. The findings that emerged from that survey were:

- While there were certainly some differences between departments, the divisional differences were far less pronounced than expected.
• There was significant consensus across departments and divisions on the following items:

**Most important role of the Libraries**

- The most important role of the Libraries is the acquisition of materials (both physical and electronic). (noted by 27 departments in four divisions)
- Other important roles of the Libraries (that were shared across divisional lines) were:
  - Library instruction on how to find/use library materials (nine departments in four divisions)
  - Connecting people to materials in other places (ILL, CBB, etc.) (nine departments in four divisions)

**Which Library services best meet your department’s needs?**

- The SRS Librarians provide valuable service that best meet the needs of departments and programs. (22 departments in four divisions)
- Acquisitions and resources meet the needs of departments and programs. (12 departments in four divisions)

**What are the most significant gaps/weaknesses in the Libraries’ work?**

- The major perceived weakness of the Libraries is the limitation on acquisitions due to budgets (noted by ten departments in three divisions).
- A second perceived weakness is the lack of books in Miller (noted by six departments in three divisions).

**What are the most important steps for the Libraries to take?**

- The most important step for the Libraries to take to support departments would be to acquire materials (physical and digital) (65 points, top item in each division).

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9 Note: The number of responses exceeds the number of responding departments because some departments separately identified physical materials and electronic materials.
10 The survey instrument asked departments to identify (and rank) the three most important steps for the Libraries to take to support the work in their department. The scores were then tallied by giving three points to a first-place vote, two points for a second-place vote, and one point for a third-place vote.
A second important step for the Libraries to take to support departments would be to continue to provide librarian assistance (28 points).

A third step for the Libraries to take would be to bring back books and/or the reference desk (18 points).

A distilled summary of the full feedback that Gensler received from the Colby community might say something like:

We believe that the Libraries exist to connect people with the resources necessary to do their work. Faculty want themselves and their students to be able to acquire knowledge when they go to the Libraries, and they recognize the value of librarians in helping connect people with the many sources of information and knowledge that are available. Students see the Libraries as a place where they can go to do their work—either by themselves or in groups. There is broad satisfaction that the Colby Libraries are providing the resources that the community needs and the guidance to navigate those resources. Students especially are very satisfied that the Libraries are meeting these needs. Faculty are more divided in their sentiment; many are very satisfied that the Libraries are meeting their needs and the needs of their students; some are concerned about a loss of connection between people and books in Miller Library—and the accompanying losses to teaching, learning, and scholarship.

Both books and digital resources are important sources of knowledge for scholarly work in the 21st century. The primary role of the Colby Libraries is to make these sources available to both faculty and students—and to provide guidance in navigating these dynamic sources. While some aspects of this access may vary by particular discipline, there is very broad consensus about the need for the Colby Libraries to continue to acquire the materials (both physical and digital) that support the intellectual work of the campus.\footnote{Some members of the Library Planning Group expressed misgivings about relying on survey and focus group responses to inform recommendations and decision-making about the Libraries. They noted that faculty judgments about the appropriate uses of the Libraries ought to outweigh student judgments or practices. Further, they noted that those faculty members whose teaching and scholarship are most centrally connected to physical materials ought to have greater sway on questions related to the balance of library resources and their location. The majority of the group, though, found the survey and focus group responses helpful in calibrating the magnitude, distribution, and durability of the concerns expressed.}
Data and Analysis

In addition to facilitating conversations among the Colby community, the Gensler team also gathered and analyzed data about the Colby Libraries, peer institutions, and facility conditions.

Benchmarking Data: Gensler acquired data from both Colby and a set of peer and aspirational institutions. These institutions had significant variations in endowment, number of students, and number of faculty. In conducting its analysis, Gensler sought to provide more normalized comparisons by using “per capita” measures (for both students and faculty). These “per capita” data take into account institution size to make the comparisons more accurate.

Gensler’s analysis of the data shows the following:

Colby is in the TOP THIRD of comparison peers:

- Staffing
  - Total library employees / faculty
- Facilities
  - Library seats / student (1st)

Colby is in the MIDDLE THIRD of comparison peers:

- Library Expenditures
  - Total library expenditures / student
  - Total library expenditures / faculty
- Resources / Materials
  - Total collection / student
  - Total collection / faculty
  - Physical title count / student
  - Physical title count / faculty
  - Physical volume count / faculty
- Facilities
  - Public workstation / student

12 The comparison institutions were (in alphabetical order): Amherst, Bowdoin, Carleton, Davidson, Hamilton, Middlebury, Oberlin, Smith, Swarthmore, Vassar, Wellesley, and Williams. Of note: All but one of these institutions is ranked higher in U.S. News and World Report. Also of note: The Library Committee Report from 2015 also did some comparative analyses. The comparison set that the Library Committee used was: Amherst, Bowdoin, Carleton, Davidson, Haverford, Middlebury, Swarthmore, Wellesley, and Williams.
Colby is in the BOTTOM THIRD of comparison peers:

- Endowment
- Students
- Staffing  
  - Total library employees / student
- Resources / Materials  
  - Physical volume count / student
- Facilities  
  - Library square footage / student

The Gensler data are available in the slides as part of their final report.

As an extension of the Gensler analysis, we further refined the analysis by gauging the effects of institutional wealth on the findings. Given the wide variation in institutional endowments (and the accompanying resources available to the institutions), some evaluation of the effect of endowment/student seems prudent, and we conducted this evaluation. Additionally, in the extended analysis we were able to explore sub-categories within library expenditures (materials/services, operations/maintenance), library staffing (MLS librarians, library professionals), and resources/materials (physical materials, digital resources\(^\text{13}\)). These additional data provide a fuller picture of the types of support that the Colby Libraries provide to the Colby community.

These extended data show the following:

Colby is in the TOP THIRD of comparison peers:

- Library Expenditures  
  - Total library expenditures / (endowment/student)  
  - Materials/services expenditures / (endowment/student)  
  - Operations/maintenance expenditures / (endowment/student)

\(^{13}\) Comparable measures of digital resources are notoriously difficult to define since some digital resources (such as digital databases) come in the form of “gateways” to a wide array of other digital sources. The best proxy measure available is the annual Oberlin survey of libraries. With a clear recognition of the constraints of these data, we employed them in order to gain the best possible understanding of how our digital resources contribute to the set of information available to members of the Colby community.
• Staffing
  o MLS librarians / faculty
  o Library professionals / faculty
• Resources/Materials
  o Total digital resources / (endowment/student)
  o Total digital resources / faculty
  o Digital books / faculty
  o Digital serial titles / (endowment/student)
  o Digital series titles / student
  o Digital series titles / faculty (1st)
  o Digital databases / (endowment/student)
  o Digital databases / student (2nd)
  o Digital databases / faculty (2nd)
  o Digital media / (endowment/student) (2nd)
  o Digital media / student
  o Digital media / faculty

Colby is in the MIDDLE THIRD of comparison peers:

• Endowment / student
• Library Expenditures
  o Materials/services expenditures / student
• Staffing
  o Library employees / (endowment/student)
  o MLS librarians / (endowment/student)
  o MLS librarians / student
  o Library professionals / (endowment/student)
  o Library professionals / student
• Resources/Materials
  o Total collection / (endowment/student)
  o Physical title count / (endowment/student)
  o Total digital resources / student
  o Digital books / student
  o Digital books / (endowment/student)

Colby is in the BOTTOM THIRD of comparison peers:

• USNWR Ranking
• Resources/Materials
  o Physical volume count / (endowment/student)
As the Library Planning Group reviewed these data, there were differing opinions among the group about both how to interpret the data and also the weight to ascribe to these data. Some members maintained that the data reveal meaningful gaps between Colby’s current position and its desired place as a preeminent liberal arts library. In this accounting, differences between size and institutional wealth should not impact our comparative assessment of library resources. Instead, Colby should aspire to be a leader in absolute terms (not just in “weighted” terms). The gaps between our current position and our desired position, then, are most keenly felt with respect to physical volume counts, overall staffing, and library square footage.

Other members of the group found the benchmarking data to be quite instructive in responding to the conventional narrative about resources for the Colby Libraries. Much of the conventional narrative about the Libraries began with premises about the Colby Libraries being significantly under-resourced. In the words of the Library Committee Report,

> A focus on information literacy requires increases in staffing, space, and acquisition budgets. In all of these areas, Colby’s libraries are in a much poorer state than the libraries at peer institutions. It is worth noting that we are up to 100,000 sq. ft. smaller (Appendix B), without a systematic program of library instruction (Appendix C), significantly understaffed (Appendix D), have significantly smaller print collections (Appendix E), and are under-budgeted (Appendix F).\(^\text{14}\)

This updated benchmarking study included more recent data (2013-14, 2015-16) and was also normed for institution size and endowment.

The more recent and normed data call into question the conventional narrative that the Libraries are under-budgeted, under-resourced, and under-staffed. While it is certainly the case that the Colby Libraries have less square footage than our peers, it does not seem fair to claim any longer that the Libraries are “significantly understaffed” and/or “under-budgeted.” The more accurate claim would be: The Colby Libraries are budgeted, resourced, and staffed comparably (and in several cases favorably) to our aspirational peers when accounting for differences in institutional size and wealth.\(^\text{15}\)


\(^{15}\) The clarity of this claim should not imply any sense of complacency in thinking about the future of the Colby Libraries. Certainly, the Libraries face a set of challenges moving forward. In facing these challenges, though, the Libraries begin from a much stronger starting position than many people had assumed.
The differences in interpretations of the benchmarking data seem to reflect a methodological difference about how to understand Colby’s current position among its peers. One group maintains that Colby should compare itself in absolute terms with the best peers possible, regardless of any differences in institutional size or wealth. In this account, the best libraries stand on their own merits, providing the richest possible set of materials and staff support—with the conclusion that a library with more materials and staffing is superior to a library with fewer materials and staff (regardless of the number of students or faculty served).

Others suggest that absolute comparisons actually obscure the significant investments that Colby has already made and do not provide a fair apples-to-apples comparison. Our size and relative wealth help to define both the resource needs for our community and the amount of institutional resources available to support the Libraries. In this view, it is reasonable to expect that a library that serves fewer people might have fewer staff and materials. Further, a library at an institution with fewer overall resources might reasonably have a smaller budget than an institution with more overall resources. The more appropriate comparisons, then, would be on “per capita” or “percentage of institutional resources” bases.

**Engineering Study:** Part of Gensler’s analysis included an engineering study of Miller Library and building in order to assess the possibility of using the “wings” of Miller to accommodate additional book stacks. The study concluded that the wings of Miller building are not structurally sufficient to support book stacks.

**Information Literacy**

The Library Committee report highlighted the importance of a program of information literacy to support Colby students in understanding and navigating the dynamic world of information resources. The Library Planning Group shares this sense of priority and is greatly encouraged to know that the Library Committee will be working on defining a program of information literacy for Colby during the 2016-17 academic year. The Library Planning Group reaffirms the institutional value of information literacy as part of the education that Colby provides to its students, and we are confident that the Library Committee will be able (in close collaboration with our librarians) to define a meaningful and sustainable program of information literacy support and instruction.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{16}\) It should be noted that the Library Planning Group did not focus on the question of information literacy but rather on space-related issues (drawing on the expertise of Gensler).
Options: Short-term and long-term

Following analysis of the community feedback, the benchmarking data, and the engineering study, Gensler proceeded to offer both short-term and long-term options. In both cases, the selection from among the options should be informed by the relative priority of particular objectives as well as the feasibility (both fiscal and operational) of the particular options.

Short-term Options:

Gensler offered a series of objectives and options that might be able to be addressed in the short term, in ways that would not require significant structural work to Miller Library, the construction of other facilities, nor the relocation of current offices or staff. These options were envisioned as potential responses to some of the feedback received from the Colby community.

Short-term objective: Strengthen the connection between people and books in Miller Library.

- Increase immediate and serendipitous access to the physical collection
- Increase the visual presence of books in Miller Library
- Return some of the books to Miller from the storage facility—particularly in response to specific needs

Short-term options:

- Install bookshelves around the perimeters of the information commons, entryway, and second floor
- Add 48” high double-sided bookcases in both the information commons and second floor
- Add upper shelving in the Reading Room
- Work with departments to return portions of the collection to Miller Library from the storage facility
  - Prioritize those departments/programs/faculty with identified needs for more immediate access to physical collections
- Arrange shelving and furniture to facilitate the connection between students and books
Both Gensler and PPD conducted measurements in order to estimate the number of additional books that Miller Library could hold with the additional shelving noted above. It appears that we could add room for an additional 10-13,000 volumes in Miller Library by adding shelving on the first and second floors of Miller Library.

Additional shelving capacity in Miller would give us the opportunity to house more of our collection in Miller Library. While the precise decisions about which books should be returned (or added) to Miller are best made by library professionals in consultation with their faculty colleagues, the following categories seem most promising:

- Books that have been frequently requested from the storage facility
- Books for which there is a substantive need for students to be able to browse on site. (Example: There are a series of Japanese language books for which the electronic indexes are either non-existent or not helpful. As a result, the only way for a student to make an informed decision about the book is actually to be able to view it. Note: The principle underlying this example—namely that books for which electronic indexing is unavailable or unhelpful might be strong candidates for return to Miller—might apply to other parts of the collection.)
- New books. Currently our new acquisitions have a very short time during which they appear as new acquisitions. More space would allow these new acquisitions to be highlighted for a longer time.

As the Library Planning Group considered these short-term options, the group was unconvinced of the value of these options. On the one hand, the number of volumes that could return to Miller Library in this option fall well below the hopes and expectations of some members of the group.\(^\text{17}\) To that group, a return of 10,000 volumes would be “merely symbolic” and would not address the substantial need for faculty and students to have in-Miller access to the physical materials in the Libraries’ collection. Others in the group expressed concerns about the opportunity costs of creating the shelving for the short-term option. The proposed locations for new built-in shelving are along the back walls of the first and second floors along with freestanding shelving in the entryway, information commons (first floor), and open hallway (second floor). Such shelving (along with the requisite browsing space) would come at the cost of some student study space as well as display space that is currently being deployed to feature the work of the Oak Fellow. Furthermore, there are concerns about how the collection would be fitted to the new shelving.

Currently, the collection proceeds uniformly through the stacks. Incorporating

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\(^\text{17}\) Opinions vary about how many (or what percentage) of the books should return to Miller from the storage facility. The range extends from “all” to “none.” In her report, Elizabeth Leonard calls for “at least 100,000 volumes” to return to Miller.
additional shelving in a different location might introduce some navigational confusion for library patrons.

The group specifically considered the potential benefits of “increasing the connection between people and books” (an objective that Gensler identified based on the feedback of the Colby community). This objective of increased connection might be satisfied by adding shelving in and among the study areas in Miller. While some saw value in this additional connection, the group as a whole was not convinced that this connection was worth the costs associated with a relatively modest increase in the number of books returned to Miller.

One additional option that the group considered was the possibility of using the top shelves in the stacks to create additional room for books in Miller. Such an approach would require specific investigation with respect to the location of sprinklers and lighting since changing those systems might prove to be cost-prohibitive. PPD is going to gauge whether the use of the top shelves would be a viable option to consider.

During the group’s discussion of ways to increase connection between people and books, the librarians did suggest that the entryway to Miller might be able to include additional shelving in order to be able to feature some of the new acquisitions for a longer time than is currently possible. Such a use for that shelving might simultaneously provide some modest connection between people and books without the attendant costs to either study space or the orderly sequencing of the main collection. The group was quite supportive of this idea.

A further area of consensus had to do with the value of “optimizing” the portion of the collection that is housed in Miller. When the initial set of books was moved to the storage facility, there was an understanding that there would be an ongoing review to ensure that Miller would house the portions of the collection that receive the heaviest use. During the intervening years, the librarians have been able to observe usage patterns of the materials in the storage facility, and they have discovered some sets of materials for which Miller would seem to be the best location. For example, some of the foreign language resources that have limited electronic indexes benefit from having students be able to browse them on site in order to determine which ones are best suited to their work. Also, there are other materials that have received use from the storage facility. The Library Planning Group endorses the ongoing review of usage patterns in order to ensure that the most frequently-consulted materials are available in the manner that is most convenient for the students and faculty.
**Long-term Options:**

The Gensler report also included some long-term options. As the Gensler report notes, long-term planning for libraries is a difficult enterprise due to the very dynamic nature of the field. Book publishing, digital production and conversion, and library operations are all changing rapidly (and significantly). As a result, it is very difficult to predict the precise set of objectives that will prove compelling 5-10 years in the future. In response to this uncertainty, the Gensler report offers a variety of long-term objectives and options with the understanding that some will prove more compelling than others as our precise needs and resources come more fully into view.

Further complicating the endeavor of long-term planning is the fact that more ambitious projects often involve multiple strategic steps. As a result, even if we were able to state currently that we want to pursue a particular long-term objective (such as bringing more books into Miller Library), we would still face the challenge of planning for multiple projects related to that goal. Also, any significant long-term options necessarily arise in a strategic context of many competing priorities for College attention and resources. While the Library Planning Group is deeply convinced of the priority of the Libraries for the future of Colby, we recognize that other colleagues might prioritize other needs more highly. Others (such as the Committee on Mission and Priorities as well as Senior Staff) will have to weigh the various competing priorities.

Central to any long-term planning effort for the Colby Libraries is a clear institutional vision with respect to teaching, learning, and scholarship at Colby. While elements of this vision will likely emerge from the work of the Distribution Requirements Task Force, other elements will come from other faculty and community conversations. Once we have a clearer vision of the nature of teaching, learning, and scholarship moving forward, the Colby Libraries will be in a much better position to map out a strategic path to support both faculty and students in pursuing that vision.

Possible long-term objectives:

- Establish durable funding sources to cover increasing acquisition costs for both physical and digital materials.
  - While a detailed analysis of the future costs of acquisitions was beyond the scope of this study, the costs for both physical and digital materials are increasing at rates that reduce our ability to acquire new materials.
- Create even more space for books in Miller Library.
• Bring improvements to Bixler and Olin libraries—possibly including maker spaces and/or a data visualization lab\(^{18}\)
• Enhance library staffing\(^{19}\)
• Take advantage of current campus-wide informal study spaces to develop a system of library-affiliated, distributed study spaces.

Possible long-term options:

• Note: Any particular long-term objective would involve multiple strategic steps. The following two examples illustrate the types of strategic steps that would be involved.
• Example—Securing acquisitions
  o This objective would require new resources to support acquisitions without limiting other library expenditures.
  o Possible strategy: establishing a Friends of the Library group\(^{20}\)
  o Possible strategy: establishing a separate budget for new materials to support new faculty\(^{21}\)
  o Possible strategy: identifying library acquisitions as a priority item in the forthcoming campaign
  o Possible strategy: extending collaborations with other libraries and networks to increase access to physical and electronic resources

• Example—More space in Miller for books
  o Strategic question: Where could additional books be placed in Miller?
    ▪ Gensler proposed a Zone model as a way to take advantage of existing space in Miller (Library and building) to accommodate additional books.
  o Strategic question: Where would current faculty in Miller building go?
    ▪ The Gensler Zone model is premised on the availability of space currently used for faculty offices.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) The director of the Colby Libraries has been (and presumably would continue to be) quite diligent and strategic in identifying particular staffing opportunities for the Libraries. A separate set of staffing suggestions is offered in Elizabeth Leonard, “The Future of the Colby Library,” March 31, 2015, p. 4-6.
\(^{21}\) Elizabeth Leonard notes, “Currently, whenever new tenure-track faculty in new fields of study arrive on campus, no additional funds are allocated to the Library’s budget to support the development of the physical and electronic resources these new faculty require for their teaching and scholarship, which are often extremely expensive.” Elizabeth Leonard, “The Future of the Colby Library,” March 31, 2015, p. 6.
The Library Committee Report suggests the possibility of a new building for offices.\textsuperscript{22}

- Strategic question: How many additional books should Miller accommodate?
- Strategic question: Which books should be prioritized?
- Strategic question: Is there a possible role for the Davis Educational Classroom in providing space for a particular set of information resources?\textsuperscript{23}

**Next Steps**

Consistent with other significant planning efforts, the Library Planning Group intends to seek initial guidance from the Committee on Mission and Priorities. Following that guidance, the Library Planning Group will disseminate this report (along with the Gensler report and slides) to the Colby community for its feedback. As has been the case since the beginning of this process, the Library Planning Group is committed to hearing from the community not only its initial thoughts and perceptions, but also its reactions to the findings along the way. Following this feedback, the Library Planning Group will finalize its report (in view of the feedback received) and make the final report available to the Colby community. Consistent with the charge to the Library Planning Group, the report will be submitted by Provost Lori Kletzer (chair of the Library Planning Group) to President David Greene.

\textsuperscript{22} Library Committee, “Report of the Library Committee,” May 1, 2015, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{23} Elizabeth Leonard notes the possibility that the Davis Educational Classroom could be redesigned “to make it more useful for information literacy training and other purposes.” Elizabeth Leonard, “The Future of the Colby Library,” March 31, 2015, p. 7. There are some constraints on the space due to the financial gifts that created the classroom, but the constraints still allow significant flexibility for the precise design and use of the room.
Closing Statement: The Library in Colby’s Strategic Vision

The Library Planning Group conducted campus-wide surveys and focus groups in spring 2016; reviewed letters, petitions, and college committee reports on the library from the past several years; and considered architectural plans and uses of the Colby library system (Miller, Bixler, and Olin) in relation to projected needs and to libraries at a dozen elite liberal arts colleges.

As befits the diversity among students, faculty members, and disciplines, the surveys, forums, and documents we reviewed reveal many uses of the Colby libraries. Faculty members across disciplines most often cited the acquisition of sources as the library’s primary role, although some use digital sources alone for teaching and scholarship while others require both print and digital media. Students seek more (and more varied) study spaces and comfortable furniture, with some preferring solitary research, others academic collaboration, and still others a mix of intellectual and social pursuits. Some users advocate integrating such functions as information technology services, experimental classrooms, archival labs in Special Collections, the Writer’s Center, and scholarly colloquia to bridge disciplines. Many faculty as well as library staff members stress programs for information literacy as part of teaching students critical thinking and research skills. They also emphasize the critical role of information literacy in helping all library users keep pace with expanding collections, technology, and ever-changing ways to navigate them both.

Underlying the remarkable diversity of needs and priorities of library users is, nevertheless, a striking common theme, consonant with the urgent recommendations of the Report of the Library Committee of May 2015, whose mandate the Library Planning Group is pledged to implement, namely: the centrality of the libraries to the creative and intellectual work of faculty members and students.

We believe it is essential to ensure that library resources meet the needs of all members of the Colby community. Toward this end, we strongly recommend that a major component of the capital campaign currently underway be earmarked to augment library funding for space and facilities, staffing, and acquisitions budget for the libraries, in order to ensure that they are on par with those at the elite colleges to whose educational caliber and reputation we aspire.

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24 The following statement was authored initially by Rob Weisbrot. The Library Planning Group had full consensus on the first three paragraphs. The fourth paragraph revealed some differences in perspective. The current version has been amended in the following ways: (1) “We believe it is essential to expand and upgrade all library resources…” has been changed to “We believe it is essential to ensure that library resources meet the needs of all members of the Colby community.” (2) “… in order to bring them on par with those at the elite colleges…” has been changed to “in order to ensure that they are on par with those at the elite colleges…” As has been true of the Library Planning Group’s work throughout the past year, the discussion of particular differences was conducted with great collegiality and comity on all sides.

25 Some members of the group would strengthen this claim by calling for expanded library resources, an expanded book collection (both in total and onsite), and a new facility.
The library system embodies our shared devotion at Colby to teaching, learning, and research. Robust increases in our investment in Colby’s libraries seem to us integral to realizing President Greene’s vision of academic achievement and prestige worthy of the nation’s finest schools.