

2021-2023 Biennium Internal Budget Proposal Narrative

Division: Western Libraries | Academic Affairs

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated on every aspect of this template. It is highly recommended that the narrative portion touch on each area. Proposals forwarded to UPRC by unit leaders will be discussed at UPRC and authors are encouraged to attend so that they may answer questions and provide clarification.

Aligning the Western Libraries Resource Access Budget with Subscription Inflation

- This is a revised version of a previously submitted budget proposal.
If box is checked please briefly outline any significant changes and/or indicate why it is being resubmitted.

For the 2019-2021 biennium, Western Libraries submitted an operating budget request for \$367,000 and indicated the need for continued increases to the collections budget in subsequent biennia. Sufficient funding was not allocated, and subscription cancellations of \$280,767 were necessary in FY21. This 2021-2023 request includes updated financial numbers, a greater focus on the severe impacts of subscription underfunding to Western's mission, and the urgency to implement a new collections funding model in this biennium in order to prevent regular subscription reductions moving forward.

Statement of Purpose: *(What is the challenge or opportunity being addressed? How does the proposal address this challenge or opportunity? Limit response to 1 page – please link to any existing reports, data, supplemental materials, etc.)*

Academic Affairs is asking for a base increase to the Libraries' Resource Access Budget (RAB) in the 2021-23 biennium in order to break the annual cycle of subscription reductions and to place library collections on a sustainable path forward. Eliminating the need for net cancellations over the next three biennia (2021-23, 2023-25, and 2025-27) would require \$672,343 in cumulative base funding, resulting in \$1,894,373 in additional spending over this period, plus the \$443,837 in one-time funds already committed by the Provost's Office for FY22-FY26 (see Table 1 at the end of this document for a year-by-year breakdown). By fiscal year, requested base funding increases to the RAB over and above the \$443,837 already committed by the Provost's Office are \$0 in FY22; \$131,291 in FY23; \$120,398 in FY24; \$110,264 in FY25; \$115,145 in FY26; \$195,245 in FY27. Beyond FY27, the RAB base would need to continue increasing by approximately 4.5 percent annually to cover vendors' inflationary increases on library subscriptions. If, by the end of FY27, base funding increases have not been sustained, the university could need to cancel as much as \$620,000 in subscriptions.

Access to journals and other library subscriptions is critical to teaching, learning, and research—core elements of Western's liberal arts and sciences mission. Library subscriptions are so important that, as of 2017, comprehensive degree-granting institutions like Western spent an average of 82.4 percent of their library collections budgets on subscriptions.¹ At Western, in

¹ Bosch, S., Albee, B., and Romaine, S. (2020). "Costs Outstrip Library Budgets: Periodicals Price Survey 2020." *Library Journal*, April 14, 2020.

recent years, that number has averaged closer to 90 percent, with almost \$2 million going to subscriptions each year.

At the same time, according to the *Library Journal's* annual survey of journal pricing, about 60 percent of libraries—including the Western Libraries²—report a flat collections budget, while periodicals prices continue to increase between 4 and 7 percent per year. The outcome is steeply declining purchasing power, resulting in the need to cancel subscriptions. Here at Western, for example, in FY21, the university lost approximately \$280,000 in subscriptions due to a flat RAB, with hundreds of thousands of additional dollars in reductions necessary over the coming biennia if funding does not increase. For Western, a flat library collections budget means labor-intensive subscription reduction processes and, more critically, delayed access to research materials for faculty and students. This issue affects faculty and staff in every college, impacting workload across the university. It is disruptive, demoralizing, and so time consuming for library staff that it has prevented us from focusing much needed attention on other parts of the library collection.

Anticipated Outcome(s):

Building a 4.5 percent annual increase into the RAB base budget to cover inflation would yield benefits across the university. Most directly, it would eliminate the need for reactionary subscription cancellations, thereby protecting immediate access to critical research and teaching resources. Western's students, faculty, and staff across all colleges would benefit from this access, as well as from recaptured time no longer needed to help review lengthy draft cancellation lists.

Additionally, funding subscription inflation would enable Western Libraries to redirect its efforts in order to address other critical faculty and student needs like monographs, multimedia, and a greater focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion in its collections. Every hour library professionals spend grappling with annual subscription reductions is an hour not spent piloting new collection development strategies, assessing the relevance and inclusivity of library materials, or reaching out to university constituencies to align collection spending with their teaching and research needs. A properly funded library is a library that is free to do its job meeting the university's mission.

Metrics: *(How will outcomes be measured? Please include current data points and goals. If this proposal will have any impact on the [Overall Metrics](#) included in the university's strategic plan, please indicate which specific ones here.)*

Full funding of this proposal is measured by eliminating the annual cycle of subscription reductions and time saved by faculty and staff across the university. In FY21, subscription reductions led to the loss of 21 databases and packages, 163 individual journals, and countless hours of labor poured into the review process (including meetings at the dean, vice president, and provost level; and time spent by Senate Library Committee, UPRC and Faculty Senate). The recent addition of more one-time funds has eliminated the need for subscription reductions in FY22; however, without base funding and inflationary increases, future years are bleak. Each annual cycle of reductions will exact a heavy toll in time and in immediate access to teaching and research materials for faculty and students in all academic departments.

² With the exception of funds related to decision packages.

The loss of journals, databases, and e-resource packages also creates an excessive reliance on interlibrary loan for access to content. Resources cancelled in FY21 accounted for more than 8,000 article downloads, database searches, and e-book chapter downloads per year during the previous three years. Use of these titles must now flow through interlibrary loan. While turnaround times for articles can be as quick as a few hours, the loss of immediate access is still disruptive. Regular base increases to the RAB would prevent further delay in access to research materials.

In terms of the [university's strategic metrics](#), access to subscriptions affects faculty retention (Tenure and Tenure-Track Faculty FTE Peer Comparisons from IPEDS), research output (University Supported Research & Creative Activity), and potentially research revenue (Research Revenue), since access to scholarly and scientific literature is essential to faculty (and graduate student) work. Faculty have expressed these concerns on many occasions, and the Libraries takes their remedy very seriously.

How does this proposal align with your departmental/divisional strategic priorities? *(Please reference specific items from the recently completed departmental/divisional strategic plan and attach a copy.)*

Reliable base funding to support the RAB is critical to meeting the Libraries' 2018-2025 strategic plan.

Western Libraries Goals

Goal 2: *Ensure the development, sustainability, and accessibility of Libraries collections to support Western's academic mission and institutional goals.*

- **Objective:** Strategic curation and data-informed decisions in support of long-term development, preservation, management of, and access to collections.
- **Objective:** Develop and steward collections in ways that value and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- **Objective:** Expand access to local and unique collections that foster deeper understanding of and engagement with the region.

Goal 3: *Lead, collaborate in, and provide optimal educational experiences that foster innovative teaching, scholarship, research, and creative activity.*

- **Objective:** Develop specialized collections that facilitate high impact teaching, learning, and research.

With adequate base funding for subscriptions, the Western Libraries can move toward a more proactive and strategic approach to collection management that will benefit the university community. Access to journals and databases will stabilize, then evolve under professional stewardship to better meet the current needs of Western's students, faculty, and staff. Library professionals will be better situated to evaluate and refresh subscriptions intentionally, respond to research trends, and facilitate transformative intellectual experiences.

Freed from the grueling annual subscription reduction process, the Libraries will also be able to turn precious bandwidth toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues, and by improving

collections through assessment and meaningful partnerships. The Libraries will more effectively preserve and grow the diversity of collections, maintaining access to titles on important DEI topics and subscribing to titles from independent publishers and presses. These activities have been a key piece of our collections roadmap since 2018, but we have been unable to make progress because of time spent managing subscription reductions.

How does this proposal support the University Mission and Strategic Objectives? *(Please refer to the [2018-2025 Strategic Plan](#) and indicate which core theme(s) this proposal will help achieve.)*

The impacts of subscription funding on the university strategic plan closely parallel the impacts on the Libraries' strategic plan, listed above. Specific university goals include:

Goal 1: *Western will provide a transformational education grounded in the liberal arts and sciences and based on innovative scholarship, research, and creative activity.*

- Objective B: Provide tools and experiences for all students to follow their intellectual curiosity, to work across disciplines, and to develop the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that enable them to effectively contribute to evolving societal needs.
- Objective C: Increase support and infrastructure for all types of scholarship, research, and creative activity.
- Objective G: Provide technological and other academic infrastructure to support curricular innovation, research, scholarship, and creative activity, civic engagement and societal justice.

Goal 2: *Western will advance a deeper understanding of and engagement with place.*

- Objective B: Support teaching, learning, research, scholarship, creative activity, and programming that engages with place in a respectful way.

Goal 3: *Western will foster a caring and supportive environment where all members are respected and treated fairly.*

- Objective A: Strengthen shared governance to ensure that students, staff, and faculty are meaningfully empowered in the university's policies, decisions, and direction

Goal 4: *Western will pursue justice and equity in its policies, practices, and impacts.*

- Objective F: Support and strengthen curricula and other programming that engage issues of access, equity, power, and privilege in and across disciplines.

Library collections that meet the needs of faculty and students speak directly to the goals above. They are a core component of a liberal arts and sciences education and provide essential academic infrastructure to support research, teaching, and learning across all disciplines. Access to a wide variety of topics and perspectives is critical if students are to have transformative educational experiences. What's more, diverse and relevant library collections provide a space for safety and growth, where people can see themselves represented and learn from the voices of others.

With adequate base funding for subscriptions, the Western Libraries will be free to move toward a proactive and strategic approach to collection development that supports and celebrates these aspirations.

What are the consequences of not funding this proposal?

Without sustained annual base increases to the Resource Access Budget to cover inflation, the university can expect as much as \$620,000 in subscription cancellations over the next three biennia (2021-23 through 2025-27) even with \$443,837 in recently committed one-time funds provided by the Provost's Office to mitigate the extent of cancellations. See Table 2, at the end of this document, for a year-by-year projection of expected cancellations.

As described above, the FY21 subscription cancellations (which totaled approximately \$280,000) led to the loss of 21 databases and packages, representing thousands of titles, and 163 individual journals. The expected budget shortfall over the coming biennia will be worse, requiring deeper cuts to Western's subscriptions, necessitating further cancellations of critical resources, and the breaking of large journal packages. Western's students, faculty, and staff will be increasingly dependent on interlibrary loan for access to journals, delaying research and coursework.

In addition to the loss of immediate access to subscription resources for faculty and students, Libraries personnel will need to continue to expend their limited time on subscription management, rather than being free to focus adequately on other critical collections issues like monograph management, assessment, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Cumulatively, these effects will negatively impact faculty and graduate student recruitment, research, and retention.

What alternatives were explored?

The Libraries has attempted to mitigate subscription reductions using one-time funds. These unpredictable and often insufficient infusions of one-time funding make multi-year planning impossible and undermine Western's vendor negotiations, particularly for large, bundled journal packages. Specifically, budget unpredictability has prevented the university from receiving more favorable licensing terms associated with a longer contract. To preserve access to bundled content, it has been necessary to make disproportionate reductions to single-journal subscriptions. The budget realities associated with vendors' business models benefits no one at the university.

Further, unpredictable or insufficient one-time funds delay the inevitable. In a recent example of this problem, one-time funds applied starting in FY2017 managed to stave off several years of cancellations. However, in FY21, when the funds ran out, the university confronted an accrued RAB deficit of nearly \$300,000 and lost access to databases, e-books, large chunks of a prominent journal package, and dozens of single journal subscriptions. Similarly, \$443,837 in one-time funding applied in FY22 through FY26 will reduce the extent of cancellations during those years, but without a continuation of support there will be a \$173,776 shortfall in the sixth year.

In addition to pursuing annual increases to the RAB base, the Libraries mitigates inflationary pressures through vendor negotiations and by participation in the Orbis Cascade Alliance regional consortium. As much as possible, we strive locally to keep annual subscription cost increases low. Within the Alliance, which centrally negotiates some journal package renewals on behalf of member libraries, there are efforts to hold renewals below the publishing industry's average inflationary increases. While these efforts cannot do away with inflationary pressures, they can slow the rate at which subscriptions outpace library budgets.

Which units (departments, colleges, etc.) will be involved?

The Western Libraries, to the benefit of all faculty and students

Equipment needed:

None.

Human Resources *(Complete the table below adding additional rows if necessary):* None.

Operating & Maintenance Costs (include service contracts, installation costs, etc.):

To eliminate the need for net cancellations over the next three biennia (2021-23, 2023-25, and 2025-27) would require \$627,343 in cumulative base funding, resulting in additional spending over the period of \$1,894,373, which does not include \$443,837 in one-time funds already committed by the Provost's Office (see table below for a year-by-year breakdown). By fiscal year, base funding increases to the RAB need to be \$0 in FY22; \$131,291 in FY23; \$120,398 in FY24; \$110,264 in FY25; \$115,145 in FY26; \$195,245 in FY27. Beyond FY27, the RAB base budget would need to continue increasing by approximately 4.5 percent annually to maintain the university's buying power for library subscriptions. See Table 1, at the end of this document, for a year-by-year summary of funds needed.

Space Requirements: None.

Table 1 RAB allocations needed to meet inflationary pressures

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
Provost One-Time Funds	\$143,837	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	—	\$443,837
Incremental Base Increase to Prevent Net Cancellations	\$0	\$131,291	\$120,398	\$110,264	\$115,145	\$195,245	\$672,343
Cumulative Base Increase to Prevent Net Cancellations	\$0	\$131,291	\$251,689	\$361,953	\$477,098	\$672,343	
Total Base RAB including Increases	\$2,163,272	\$2,294,563	\$2,414,961	\$2,525,225	\$2,640,370	\$2,835,615	
FY21-23 Request to UPRC for RAB Base Funding = \$131,291							
Total additional funds to be spent FY22-FY27: \$2,338,210 (includes one-time and recurring funding)							

Table 2 Estimated subscription cancellations FY22 through FY27 if the RAB is not fully funded

	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	CUMULATIVE TOTAL
Estimated Subscription Cancellations	\$0	\$131,291	\$114,490	\$98,937	\$98,858	\$173,776	\$617,352