

The Living Library

Long-Term Plan 2021–2025



Long-Term Plan 2021–2025

The Living Library

The *Living Library* is a library that serves as a vibrant place on campus and also online; a place where science is visible and tangible, where everyone is welcome to find what they are looking for and more.



The *Living Library* is a place where people share knowledge, where everyone can be sure that research results are well managed, safely stored, easily and freely accessible, and retrievable. Where you can feel the buzz of the university. Where everyone feels at home, and feels free and safe to be themselves.

It is an active community where researchers, lecturers and students create knowledge, publish, share and use research results and educational resources, meet and inspire each other. The library staff is there to help them do this.

The *Living Library* is an organization that evolves rapidly and innovates, with people who are in contact with each other, society, the university and with library staff at home and abroad. We learn and are aware of the latest developments in information systems

and adapt these to applications that can be used by Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

The traditional library that we were all accustomed to, that smelt of books and leather armchairs, with serene silence and light from reading lamps on long wooden tables, is a familiar image and still evokes a positive feeling in most people. This concept of a library as a strong brand still exists although nowadays libraries often look different and modern libraries are not only found on campus but also online. Librarians also still exist. They are no longer grey-haired ladies with glasses and a bun urging you to be silent, but they are hostesses (both male and female), guides, helpers, inspirators and innovators. Libraries are living and in a state of flux, and consist of people who share, consume, create, write and learn. The libraries' environment is changing very rapidly and so are libraries, but they are still libraries.

The new, living library is not as quiet as the old one. We share knowledge online as well as in person. The appeal of a library as a place where you are surrounded by knowledge also makes a library an ideal meeting place. Today's librarians organize these encounters and foster connections within the university and far beyond. The heart of the university beats in the library and that is where we go for inspiration, to build on what is already there and to figure out what more you would like to make of it.

Making knowledge available used to be a matter of collecting, purchasing and keeping books. It's now a matter of discovering, searching and finding resources and collections available all over the world. And about supporting publication and open sharing in Open Access. The library ensures that the results from research and education are not lost. The old collections are

still there. They are being carefully managed and now also used innovatively in teaching and research, giving them a new lease of life through digitization and new presentation techniques such as VR, 3D printing and augmented reality.

We have three aspirations in our quest to become a true *Living Library*. These are briefly summarized below and are specified in more detail in this Long-Term Plan.

Aspiration 1

Being an inspiring meeting place for people and knowledge

Libraries are an ideal place for encounters and social interaction. We will create vibrant living libraries in all the buildings on campus over the coming years. The rooms will be filled with books and works of art and heritage so that they will look like libraries but with a distinctive VU Amsterdam look and feel. They will become places where people feel at home and connected to VU Amsterdam.

In addition to quiet study areas where you can concentrate, the libraries will become places where students, lecturers and researchers come into contact with interesting people, stories, literature and scientific information. Students, lecturers and researchers will develop new knowledge and expertise together in the libraries. Library staff will be available on location and online for questions and advice.

Based on this vision, we have already designed various rooms over the past years, including the 'De Verdieping' Reading Room on 2B and the Researchers Room for Classics in the Main Building and VU Education Lab in the New University Building (NU Building). The knowledge and experience gained here will be used to transform study areas throughout the campus. This aspiration will help us contribute to the goals for A Broader Mind and a vibrant, innovative and social campus that are part of the VU Amsterdam Strategy.

Aspiration 2

Finding and being found: all the information needed for impact in science and society

Researchers, lecturers and students have to deal with a huge information overload. It is not easy to find all the relevant information and data. The library can help with systematic reviews and advanced search techniques. At the moment we primarily do this for Medicine programmes, but we will expand this to other fields starting in 2021. We offer a wider array of information so that it is possible to search for data and images in addition to text. Libraries all over the world are working on Linked Open Data, a way to make the various types of information findable. We are affiliated to this movement and will implement this new type of data retrieval in the Netherlands at VU Amsterdam.

Together with the VU Amsterdam community we will ensure that Open Science becomes the new way of working. In this way we will facilitate the dissemination of VU Amsterdam research results. With the help of Research Intelligence we will show the scientific and societal impact of research at VU Amsterdam. This aspiration will help us contribute to VU Amsterdam Strategy's goals of a new system of recognition and reward, the improvement of our academic reputation and the further digitization of business operations, education and research.

Aspiration 3

Educational resources

The information overload presents students with a challenge: How do they know whether scientific or other information is reliable and how can they find reliable information?

The library can help with online advice, courses and serving as a guide in the expanding information landscape. Digital educational resources are becoming more and more diverse and new technologies are being used to make education interactive, blended and ready for the future. We will help lecturers and students with these changes. And if the new teaching materials are made openly available, lecturers can use each other's materials and not only current students will be able to make use of the materials but more people will be given the opportunity to develop themselves through lifelong learning. In this way we will facilitate open educational resources worldwide. Furthermore, we will also use our special collections and heritage and promote their innovative use in education.

This aspiration will help contribute to VU Amsterdam Strategy's goals of future-proof teaching formats and lifelong development.

How are we going to achieve our aspirations together?



As a University Library we serve all our researchers, lecturers and students, we organize activities and meetings, and we are aware of all the latest developments in the field of information systems. These are the three parts we wish to play to achieve our aspirations:

Making life easier

Our practical support aims to take work off the hands of researchers and lecturers and make things easier for students. We discuss and give advice, but also carry out practical tasks. We set out books and journals, we select, order, purchase and give access to licenced materials, we provide reliable search results and offer tools and techniques for research data management. This operational part of our work underpins our service and builds upon expertise and competencies traditionally present at a library.

Connecting people

As a University Library we work with everyone and for everyone at the university and beyond, often playing the role of organizer and driving force behind activities. Because we are a central service that is directly linked to our primary processes we can connect activities taking place at the various faculties and thus advance them together. Important instruments for achieving this are participation in VU Amsterdam forums for teaching and research, extensive faculty library committees and being involved in student participation.

Innovating

The *Living Library* is constantly evolving and the people at the library are at the forefront of developments in the information landscape. We are an active participant in national and international innovative projects and use new methods and technologies at VU Amsterdam, together with education and research support staff.

To be able to continue to fulfil the above-mentioned roles at a high level and professionally in the coming years, it is essential that employees can identify with the role that goes with their position and specialism. Ideally, they will work on their own and each other's development, possibly together with colleagues and/or managers, to keep in touch with relevant internal and external developments. We consider the competencies ownership, entrepreneurship, sharing and imparting knowledge, analytical and an open attitude important for all our University Library staff and we will help each other to maintain these competencies and to develop them further.

We work together, each with our own responsibility, focusing on service and being open to new ideas and a new, experimental way of working. As a University Library, we work less in traditional departments, but interdisciplinarily on projects so that insights from different disciplines come together to achieve our goals.

Developments in the next five years

The VU Amsterdam Strategy defines developments that determine how the university will operate. These developments will also have an impact on the University Library.

Digitalization is changing the form and content of education and research, encounters and the presentation of collections

New methods in teaching and research, such as Open Science, FAIR data and Open Education are changing the need for content and the type of results. Encounters and meetings are increasingly taking place online or in a hybrid format and the digital presentation of collections is crucial to reach audiences. These changes mean that the library will also alter what it makes available and the associated support services.

Shift from the transfer of information to the acquisition and application of knowledge

We support and teach information literacy, which helps students to learn how to find and evaluate information and knowledge and they also learn to contribute high-quality information to an expanding world of information and knowledge.

Lifelong development, and flexibility and personalization in education are becoming the new norms

Educational resources are becoming relevant to more people and are used in a flexible and personalized way. This also changes the way in which we make the material available.

Research must demonstrate its significance and have a genuine impact

Data on research results are important in demonstrating significance and impact. We play a major role in this using the research registration system Pure and the analyses of Research Intelligence.



Societal issues are increasing in scope and complexity

The complexity of society calls for cooperation in a combination of disciplines and people who can deal with this. As a place where you are surrounded by knowledge, the library is an ideal meeting place for people, with opportunities to get acquainted with different disciplines and perspectives and to explore and reflect.

Open Science

A new way of conducting research, based on openness during the research process and the open sharing of results, is no longer just a dream but has become a reality for more and more researchers. These researchers want to propagate this way of working and are looking for support to make this possible.

International setting

The number of international students and staff at Dutch universities is growing steadily, even in these times of restrictions due to COVID-19. The international setting will determine with whom research and education will be shared and the collaborative environment that is needed.

Aspiration 1



Being an inspiring meeting place for people and knowledge

The university is a community of students, researchers, lecturers and staff who together push the boundaries of knowledge and enrich society with that knowledge. A place for free and inquiring minds. In that tradition of the university, we will design our spaces as Living Libraries, where students together with teaching staff and researchers encourage each other in fundamental research and social engagement. They are places where science becomes tangible and new ideas emerge from the cross pollination between disciplines. In this way, the University Library will become the designated place to engage in conversation with interesting people, listen to their stories, and to stumble upon relevant literature and scientific information.

From a place to study to a library

Space for peace and quiet and interaction are important conditions for acquiring new knowledge. This is why we will provide quiet, safe and inspiring places to study in all the buildings on campus and will design the spaces with all the facilities needed to collaborate. The study areas will be flexible and versatile, and will grow with the needs of our users. The libraries at VU Amsterdam are also open in the evenings for those interested. The study areas will become inspiring libraries through a combination of services and a pleasant atmosphere with works of art and heritage, greenery and books. A place where one feels at home and connected to VU Amsterdam.

Help and support

Help is always close to hand at the library; our staff are easily approachable and committed partners for students seeking advice or assistance. To improve our findability, we visit our users in the faculties with mobile service desks and information specialists who are visibly present (embedded librarians). The University Library provides support on the virtual campus through services such as online tutorials and peer to peer support.

Restack and reuse

Students like to surround themselves with books. However, our books are stored in closed stacks and many of them are no longer or rarely lent out. We are going to determine which books are no longer relevant in terms of content because they are available electronically or outdated. We will take that part of the collection that really has no added value in terms of content (and is still in stock elsewhere in the Netherlands) from the stacks and use it to give the study areas and meeting rooms a special atmosphere by using the books as building blocks or raw material for works of art with books, for furniture or as inspiring sound insulation. We will also work with books as an inspiration and set up open bookcases based on themes that can give our users a different perspective.

Stories of the campus

Interesting objects of heritage and art trigger the imagination and enhance the development of A Broader Mind. This is why we will highlight these objects in portable showcases and pop-up exhibitions. We will ensure that the objects on display are a gateway to the latest scientific insights. To this end, we will put together exhibitions that are a co-creation between students and staff. Art and science come together in the VU ART SCIENCE gallery, the exhibition space in the NU Building, and here we also encourage students and the general public to look at things differently. We use digital technology such as Virtual Reality, an Immersion Room and 3D printing to make exhibitions more lively and to encourage interaction. This technology enables people in the [Living Library](#) to become acquainted with the stories of and about our book and heritage collections, regardless of their knowledge level and educational background. The themes of our exhibitions will be explored in more depth through debates, lectures and podcasts. We will arrange these activities with the 3D Debate Centre, academic and student associations and various other groups in the VU Amsterdam community.

There is also a literary and cultural programme at the University Library for students and staff. We work with partners within and outside VU Amsterdam to facilitate initiatives with books, stories and writing. Together with readers at faculties we will establish a Literary Salon, where the written and spoken word will be celebrated in all its facets by making it a place to read, write and have in-depth conversations.

As part of the open and vibrant VU campus the library will actively seek to connect to activities in Zuidas and Amsterdam. We will work together with the other libraries and heritage institutions in Amsterdam on exhibitions with and about the city and on shared access to collections and study areas.

Aspiration 2

Finding and being found: all the information needed for impact in science and society



We will ensure that researchers can find all the relevant reliable information they need and that their own research and research results can be found. Together with researchers we will learn what Open Science entails, how we can work together throughout a research project and share results. We will analyse the impact of research conducted by VU Amsterdam and thus help researchers set their goals.

Searching and finding

The amount of information available has become overwhelming. This is why libraries now increasingly take on the role of being a guide that helps the user find their way through the online and offline information overload rather than just being a place to store and find information.

In the coming years, researchers will be able to turn to the information specialists at the University Library to obtain a reliable overview of relevant data, information and literature. We will use systematic reviews to ensure that researchers gain as complete an overview as possible of the available sources of information. In doing so, we will strengthen the interdisciplinarity of research at VU Amsterdam and thereby effectively work towards the goals of A Broader Mind in Academia.

We will introduce advanced search methods using Artificial Intelligence, which will make the search process more complete and less labour intensive. We will incorporate automated and intelligent

content suggestions into our search systems and browsers, through plug-ins that point the user to relevant sources of information, for instance.

The expected growth of Linked Open Data, which makes content accessible in various formats, offers many opportunities to view a wide range of information. We will actively contribute to the international development of this new retrieval method and investigate how we can use it to offer better and more complete search results.

The enormous amount of information makes the rating of information even more important. A core task of the University Library will therefore continue to be to help researchers and students to assess the value of the information they find.

Sustainable preservation and access

Academic research produces many types of results and data, such as pre-prints, data management plans, datasets, project proposals, ethics applications and reviews. As part of Open Science, transparency in, and sustainable access to, these results, research methods and steps in the research process is desired. The FAIR principles are an important guideline in achieving this and the University Library offers personal assistance and tools to be able to work in line with these principles.

One of the ways in which we do this is by improving and expanding the options of our research information systems. Our goal is that all results

of research conducted at VU Amsterdam are registered, managed and made freely accessible. We will do this in particular through the Research Data Support Network, which brings together the expertise of departments and faculties. The Network will be a distinctive place for all questions related to Research Data Management. In addition to infrastructure, training and advice, the RDS network will also foster connections and sharing between people involved in this subject matter.

Over the past years we digitized a growing part of our special collections and we will make the data open and searchable. The information will be presented in appealing digital exhibitions but will also be sustainably preserved and can be searched in detail for research purposes.

Open publishing

Open Access is an essential element of Open Science as it ensures the greater accessibility of scientific knowledge to researchers and a wider audience. We will help VU Amsterdam to obtain an Open Access ratio of 100%. To facilitate this we will make it as easy as possible for researchers to publish in Open Access by making them aware of existing deals with publishers, for example.

The development of an Open Access dashboard will provide faculties with information about their Open Access ratio and opportunities to increase this ratio. We will also make previously published articles openly accessible through our research

information system Pure. To facilitate Open Access in as many ways as possible, we will continue to explore publishing platforms and models that can provide alternatives for making research results available.

Analysing and enhancing impact

Research conducted by VU Amsterdam has an impact in many areas. Demonstrating that impact is important to be able to adequately recognize and appreciate academic staff. In the past, impact factors in peer-reviewed journals were particularly important. VU Amsterdam now wants to move towards a more balanced vision on recognition and reward through A Broader Mind in Academia. As information specialists, we are developing the expertise to analyse the interesting knock-on effects of VU Amsterdam research in science and in society, so that in addition to scientific criteria, social relevance can also be taken into account as a quality criterion. In doing so, we will include the SDGs and aspects of VU Amsterdam's profile such as sustainability and social responsibility.

Our analyses of academic and societal impact enable us to provide information that research institutes and research groups can use to help them make choices that enhance their impact.

In addition to demonstrating academic and societal impact we are also working on evaluation methods to show different contributions to a research project, so that these can be rewarded in a

more balanced way. One of the ways in which we do this is to make the different author and other roles in research papers evident and shareable. This makes it possible to evaluate different contributions to a research project and to take team achievements into account when valuing research groups.

National and international cooperation

Being a connector and innovator the University Library invests heavily in national and international cooperation. Innovative research is needed to provide the best support for Open Science, advanced searching and finding, and impact analysis at VU Amsterdam. That research is conducted in collaboration with others, in an international context. We are actively involved in European projects (European Open Science Cloud), the Association of European Research Libraries (LIBER) and the national community for Open Access and FAIR data. We also develop in collaboration with Dutch libraries (UKB, SHB) and SURF, our cooperative for ICT in education and research. We work on impact analyses and Open Source with the Aurora Alliance and the Aurora Network.

Aspiration 3



Educational resources

We make teaching materials openly available, help students search and encourage the use of innovative teaching materials.

Universally available information and education

Students must also be able to find their way in an overcrowded information landscape. Commercial parties offer their own educational platforms where students can take online classes. These developments are challenging traditional educational institutions to reflect on the added value of a university education. VU Amsterdam wants to offer that added value by providing a study environment where students do not primarily attend lectures to acquire knowledge, but where they are challenged by committed teachers to develop their own vision on a large amount of available information and to critically reflect on this during lectures. Especially at a time when information and education is ubiquitous, the campus offers an environment where students and teachers can challenge each other to explore new horizons during interactive lectures.

Digital technologies can help lecturers achieve those goals. Experiments with serious gaming, VR, 3D printing, and interactive online textbooks are slowly beginning to get through to educational practice. In addition, the range of digital learning materials on offer is growing as online and open education experience rapid growth worldwide. VU Amsterdam's Strategy is committed to the open

sharing of knowledge and experience to facilitate societal progress and progress in general. This is why we promote Open Education as one of the essential elements of Open Science.

Finding and using: didactic tools and educational content

The library is a content specialist and information expert, and building on that experience, we can create solutions and parameters that help us achieve educational goals. We help lecturers facilitate blended learning and give them advice on how to create and share online teaching materials.

Finding and incorporating appropriate and diverse teaching materials is becoming an important skill for lecturers. We provide advice on the best content for the chosen teaching formats. And access to online learning materials is being made as low threshold as possible. We will provide tools and platforms that give a reliable overview of available didactic materials and offer opportunities for reuse and editing. We will introduce advanced search systems that can also scan multi-media for relevant content. For the sharing of teaching materials, we will help lecturers with any questions they have about copyright, storage and licensing.

Being a partner in the Network for Teaching and Learning (NT&L) and being a participant in the national Versnellingsplan (acceleration plan) will

help us achieve these goals at VU Amsterdam. Digital teaching formats are ideally suited for implementing international projects, which is why we are going to investigate interesting opportunities for collaboration together with our partners, in the Aurora alliance, for instance. We will promote the international sharing of knowledge through LIBER and as a member of the European Network of Open Education Librarians.

Information literacy for students: finding, using and reflecting

The rise of fake news, deep fakes and conspiracy theories shows that a critical attitude is becoming more and more important. We provide education for students in which they learn to find information and evaluate its value. We expand on this by teaching students to reflect on the information found (examining the source) as an important skill not only in studies and research, but also particularly in society. We will develop lectures and digital teaching materials and make them available in pop-up tutorials. This means that we can offer help where and when the user needs it most.

Using heritage for education of the future

Special Collections can prompt ideas and thus lead to critical reflection. We will discuss with lecturers how objects from the collection can help them develop engaging, object-based learning lectures. To this end, we will ensure that the collections and information about the collections are more

easily accessible and that new digital collection formats (e.g. 3D and VR) also become available. We will also invite students to join us in exploring the possibilities of the rich heritage collections for their studies and research.

Colophon

Text

University Library, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
communicatie.ub@vu.nl

Design

Total Design

© Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2021