

## Library Annual Report: 2024/25

In a time of transition for Hollins University and its academic curriculum, the library joined the institution in reflection and the consideration of future directions. As the university began the new Hope Scholars admissions program to provide increased access for low-income students and the Provost's office launched an academic renewal process to reshape the curriculum for those students, the library conducted a thorough examination of itself and its relationship to the key initiatives propelling Hollins forward.

We reviewed and revised our mission statement. We undertook the library's first-ever external review. We assessed the accessibility of our resources to our community. We met with library colleagues at Virginia Western Community College, to grow our understanding of the skills and abilities that transfers and students with dual-enrollment credits bring to Hollins. We continued conversations about faculty status for librarians, considering the goals and potential benefits from additional faculty integration.

Our new mission statement reflected the increasingly complex information environment in which we live, and placed a greater emphasis on traditional library principles of equity and access.

The Wyndham Robertson Library fosters student success at Hollins University and beyond by facilitating our community's critical engagement with the world's complex information environments. Guided by our fundamental commitments, we strive to educate, connect, and build a community strengthened through academic freedom and equitable support and access.

We look forward to future actions guided by this new mission statement, and we celebrate actions we've already taken to highlight these new emphases. Notably, teams of library staff members, rather than isolated individuals, have led these initiatives.

- The team of Rebecca Seipp Behnisch, Jessi Hood, and James Miller developed a pilot textbook reserves program and identified campus partners to help us launch the pilot for 2025/26, placing a focus on more equitable access for classroom resources for all students.
- The team of Rebecca, Shawna Battle, and James carefully reviewed our Interlibrary Loan options and chose to change our software service provider to place a greater emphasis on seamless ILL connection for our community.
- Instruction librarians teamed together to debut a new form of educational outreach, pop-up instruction in the Moody dining hall, to facilitate additional community engagement with complex information environments.
- The team of Rebecca, Coleman Holth, and Maryke Barber consulted with the Art Department and created an art competition that invited student art, a new mural, into WRL, helping build community and provide a more welcoming space.

More is to come, as our library team reviews the recommendations received from our external reviewers. In the wake of our [self-study](#) and [external review report](#), we chose a small number of recommendations to investigate further. Our team is conducting those investigations, with every library staff member participating in the review of at least one recommendation.

Also as the 24/25 academic year ended, we received welcome news from the Provost's office of a transparent new compensation structure for librarians, to be stepped similarly to faculty salaries, with an accompanying opportunity in 2025/26 to develop a promotion structure for all non-tenure-track

continuing faculty at Hollins, including librarians. We welcome this opportunity to continue to highlight the extensive teaching, service, and scholarship conducted by our librarians.

- **Teaching:** Four of our seven librarians have taught semester-long courses in the new GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) Studies certificate, and two have taught first-year foundations courses. All of our librarians have supervised library internship opportunities for students, including GLAM certificate seekers and others. Nearly all of our librarians contributed to the 100 course-embedded instruction sessions, and 21 other educational sessions (orientations, workshops, etc.), we taught in 2024/25.
- **Service:** Five librarians served on committees for state and/or national and/or consortial associations in 2024/25, including two librarians serving in leadership roles on those committees. For the university, librarians provided a wide range of service in 2024/25, including committee work for the Leading EDJ Conference, the Working Group on Slavery and its Contemporary Legacies, and the Academic Renewal and Research Design Team; Search Advocacy for two faculty search committees; and workshop and assessment leadership for faculty teaching INQ courses in the Core Curriculum (helping fill in for the Director of the Core Curriculum, on sabbatical for the year).
- **Scholarship:** Four librarians presented conference sessions and/or poster sessions in 2024/25, and another had a peer-reviewed article published in a leading library journal.

### **Preparing our students to succeed in the world's complex information environments**

Finding meaningful and reliable information, whether for academic research, civic engagement, or any other reason, has become an increasingly complex task, and our new mission statement recognizes this challenge. Social media platforms have rapidly increased the speed at which information is disseminated, making it more difficult to insert reflection and deliberation into information gathering and sharing processes. Artificial intelligence has added another layer of complexity, with its ability to instantly generate textual and audiovisual content with next-to-no oversight.

Information literacy frameworks help us to make sense of this information overload, and we are engaged with those frameworks (authority, scholarship as conversation, and information has value, to name three) in addressing AI's influence and impact on our information-gathering habits.

We continue to develop our library's internal AI knowledge and expertise, led by Digital Pedagogy and Scholarship Librarian Sara Sprague. More than half of the library staff gathered once/month throughout the academic year to review and process new developments in AI, and to get hands-on practice with AI tools. Developing our internal expertise has led to greater engagement with students and faculty across campus.

We now facilitate introductions to AI usage in research in several courses, and Sara leads an AI-focused workshop for Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows. We look at general LLM AI tools such as Copilot in helping to define research questions. We consider scholarly-focused LLM AI tools such as SciSpace in helping to understand the scholarly literature on a given subject. We facilitate classroom discussions about the ethics of AI usage, and its impacts on the larger world.

To broaden the conversation, and to invite more students to participate, we also debuted pop-up instruction at lunchtime in Moody. As part of our civic engagement efforts in fall of 2024 (which

included white board questions in the library such as “why do you vote,” and Maryke’s participation in a campus-wide voting campaign), James and Luke hosted a pop-up instruction session that asked students to identify true and false statements related to electoral campaigns, encouraging them to use a SIFT (Stop / Investigate / Find the Source / Trace) approach to interrogate the veracity of information. Sara, Maryke, and Rebecca hosted a pop-up session built around AI-created deep fakes.

Sara also built faculty workshops around AI in 2024/25, including stand-alone sessions and within the faculty development retreat, to help faculty identify where and how they might integrate AI into their courses. Sara’s expertise in technology, and particularly in the usage of instructional technology, led to her selection as the creator of the new one-credit technology toolkit virtual course, to be required of all students at Hollins as part of the Core Curriculum.

In recognition that Hollins is not the first educational setting our students experience, nor will we be their last, we seek to better understand our students’ previous experiences with research and information literacy instruction. We engaged with Virginia Western Community College staff to learn more about transfer students and traditional first-year students who arrive with dual enrollment credits (for example, about 25% of our FTFY students arrive on campus having already satisfied the INQ requirement within the Core). Our learning process continues into 2025/26, with Maryke planning to join VWCC librarians on a visit to a high school(s). We will share action steps based on our discoveries in future reports.

### **Educating our community**

For the first time in nearly two decades, we made a significant change to our liaison organizational structure in 2024/25. We shifted away from a divisional librarian structure, in which one librarian was responsible for instruction, research assistance, and collection development for all (or the vast majority) of departments within each academic division at Hollins. We shifted to a departmental liaison structure, with librarians assigned to individual academic departments.

Part of this was driven by a structural change at Hollins, in which the traditional four divisions re-organized into three chapters. Part of this was driven by the desire to give more librarians the opportunity to become involved in liaison work (Sara became a new liaison, working with three academic departments). And part of the motivation was a desire to more evenly distribute the instructional workload across the team of librarians.

As a result of these changes, and partly because of helping to cover for Rebecca’s maternity leave in fall semester 2024, James Miller taught 28 course-embedded instruction sessions, more than doubling the 11 sessions he taught in 2023/24. I congratulate James on his admirable adaptability to expand his responsibilities in an area of interest (instruction) to him. Our rebalancing efforts were successful, with three liaison librarians (James, Luke, and Maryke) teaching between 21 and 28 sessions, and a fourth (Rebecca) teaching 13 in the spring semester, after being out on maternity leave in the fall.

In sum, across Hollins, librarians led 100 sessions for students in 90 courses across 23 degree programs in 2024/25. These sessions covered a wide range of topics and issues, from the aforementioned AI discussions to database usage to literature review development to evaluating web sources, and much more. Archivist Isabel Folck led 10 of these sessions, bringing students into contact with the rich

materials in our special collections, from historical Hollins documents to rare books to Margaret Wise Brown's manuscript collection.

For the second consecutive year, we also extended our reach beyond the classes in which we have a physical presence. Our beginning information literacy module, developed by librarians under the leadership of Maryke and facilitated by the FYF course instructor and/or student success leader, was again incorporated into every first-year foundations class. First-year students also complete the library scavenger hunt as part of their FYF requirements, introducing them to WRL's spaces, people, and all the building has to offer.

In addition to our work spanning the curricular offerings at Hollins, we also continue to grow our GLAM Studies certificate program in partnership with the museum. We offered three more GLAM classes in 2024/25, the second year of the program's existence. Six students earned a GLAM certificate in 2025, and we project to have six more graduates in May 2026. Hollins students also continue to show up for GLAM classes, with our average course enrollment well above HU's 8:1 student-to-faculty ratio.

- Fall 2024: Behind the Scenes at the Archive: 16 students
  - First time the course was offered.
- Spring 2025: Shaping Memory: 17 students
  - Second time the course was offered; consistent demand means we will continue to offer this core GLAM course every year.
- Spring 2025: Behind the Scenes at the Library: 19 students
  - First time Maryke Barber taught the course.

### **Connecting our community**

Our metadata team re-formed, under the leadership of newly installed Metadata Librarian Coleman Holth, and began identifying and addressing areas with potential for improving discoverability of our resources. For example, to better integrate ArchivesSpace records (records of our archival collections) into OneSearch, we added links to ArchivesSpace from appropriate catalog records. To help relieve archival processing workloads, the team shifted Hollins thesis cataloging responsibilities from Isabel to Coleman, who established workflows for his student assistants to help initiate metadata creation. And in an important achievement for visibility of our library holdings on the open web through OCLC's WorldCat service, James overcame multiple hurdles to enable DataSync to help our records stay current on WorldCat via automated record updates.

An important part of connecting our community is to regularly review how we spend our money, so we can identify where we can re-allocate resources toward new initiatives that address library and university priorities. In the fall of 2024, we completed a thorough review of all our single-title journal subscriptions, including a usage analysis and follow-up conversations with faculty. The subsequent journal cancellations reduced our single-title subscription spending by more than 50%, enabling us to continue covering inflationary costs for more relevant resources and to re-allocate funds toward resources better matching the needs of our students and faculty. For example, our pilot textbook reserves initiative, to be rolled out in Fall 2025, was largely funded by savings from periodicals cancellations. For more about this initiative, read the Access and Equity section of this report.

We also brought a popular reading collection back to our community. Two years after we ended our subscription to a print popular reading collection, we debuted an online collection of popular reading titles through Overdrive. The service provided immediate support to student and faculty/staff book clubs, making selected titles available to all members.

In terms of usage of library collections, we had a mixed set of findings:

- We saw a slight rebound in checkouts of physical books and films from the lowest point on record, from 3,734 back up to 4,458. This is still under half the number of annual checkouts we recorded prior to the pandemic.
  - Permanent reserve items such as graphing calculators, laptops, and chargers continue to be popular, with 1,629 checkouts in 2024/25.
- Online journal article accesses fell significantly, from 38,885 to 31,141, approximately a 20% drop from the average over the past four years (40,429). We will keep a close eye on this metric in the coming years, but it's possible this is a one-year blip -- as seen in our e-book usage below.
- After our ebook usage dropped to 18,187 in 2023/24, a 30% drop from its 3-year average, usage rebounded in 24/25 to 23,120, in line with previous years.
- We fulfilled 635 Interlibrary Loan borrowing requests for our community. Our ILL usage has been in decline, which is at least in part a positive result from a more open scholarly environment that makes more articles immediately accessible.
  - To enable more seamless access to Interlibrary Loan for students and faculty, we decided at the end of 2024/25 to transition to a new ILL software, Rapido, that will be embedded within OneSearch. Read more about our new transparent ILL processes in the Access and Equity section.
- We recorded the lowest number of items exchanged between Roanoke College and Hollins in the history of our shared collection and catalog: 277 RC items checked out by HU patrons, and 247 HU items checked by RC patrons. We made an adjustment a few years ago to account for the ongoing decline in shared physical resources, to run our courier service only on days on which we have requests for materials. This adjustment has approximately halved the cost of this service, appropriate for the decreased usage.

Though there were mixed results in connecting our community with library-curated resources, we saw explosive growth in the world's usage of our community's history, scholarship and creative work. Visitors recorded 196,757 downloads of items from the Hollins Digital Commons, our online repository of the scholarship, creative works, and historical record of Hollins University, nearly doubling our previous annual record. And our content in the HDC continues to broaden: For the first time in 2024/25, we uploaded student posters to the Digital Commons from our Hollins Science Seminar and Student Performance and Research Conference (SPARC).

We also connect faculty and students to educational technologies (Moodle primarily, but also Loom, Hypothes.is, and others), and Sara's creation of a faculty resource hub at the end of 2024/25 was a significant step toward creating a one-stop shop for faculty seeking resources and support. More instructional aids will be added to the hub in the coming year.

## **Building our community**

Creating and strengthening community among our faculty, staff, and students is a long-standing priority for our library, and we do so through events, spaces, and more. We do this work in partnership with colleagues and students, responding to campus needs and desires.

Of Maryke's library outreach programs and events last year, 70% were in collaboration with non-library colleagues. Examples included exhibit co-development with student clubs, co-leading the book club with SSWBB colleagues and faculty, and exam week care bag co-creation with the Dean of Students. Isabel partnered extensively with Global Learning director Ramona Kirsch to recognize the 70th anniversary of Hollins Study Abroad, including exhibits, archival research, and programming for Reunion.

Exam week care bags are an excellent example of the library working to address changing student demographics. In recognition of our growing number of commuter students, who might not be on campus in the evening to take advantage of our traditional final exam snacks and stressbusters, we made 100 fall semester exam care bags especially for our commuter students, allowing them to take a piece of this Hollins experience home with them. More than half were picked up.

Traditional offerings such as the faculty course spa, the authors & achievers lunch, the faculty writers' retreat, and write-ins (co-sponsored with the CLE) continued successfully in 24/25. Maryke and Dina Hackley-Hunt formed an inclusive excellence book club, bringing together staff and faculty to discuss books of interest.

Meanwhile, we also continue to develop our spaces to ensure they are as welcoming as possible to all community members. The WRL artwork planning team's 2024 report led to a new student art contest, and the installation of the winning mural in a study nook on the ground floor. We plan to continue this initiative in coming years, giving us an ongoing mechanism to add student work to select study spaces in the building.

Also building on the planning team's report, we received our first professional artwork for WRL installation, a Dorothy Gillespie piece donated to the museum (and on long-term loan to the library) for the purpose of bringing color and vibrancy to WRL.

Smaller touches -- for example, potted plants in the accessible entrance and in the Goldsmith Conference Room -- are also bringing life and warmth to our spaces.

We also continue to receive anecdotal evidence in student conversations that having student success staff in the Green on the first floor makes WRL a more welcoming space. Though we saw a decrease in the number of people in the building in 2024/25, a 10% drop from 70,191 to 63,986, we believe we still are doing the right things to welcome our community into our spaces.

## **Access and Equity**

We are excited to bring access and equity to the fore in our revised mission statement. These are two of the five core values of librarianship, as defined by the American Library Association. They are also vitally important to our work at Hollins, particularly as we welcome more low-income and first-generation students to the university through the Hope Scholarship. We must make sure that we are doing everything we can to level the playing field for all students, and to ensure our services and resources are visible, understandable, and accessible to all.

A prime example of this is our decision to shift to Rapido for Interlibrary Loan -- as the leader of our ad-hoc ILL software team, Rebecca, said, "user ease was at the front of everyone's mind" in the decision process. No longer will students have to exit OneSearch, our discovery system, to make a request. No longer will they have to wonder about delivery times or formats. Requests will be integrated into their OneSearch account, and they will have clear information about expected delivery times and formats.

Another example, and one on which we've placed a growing emphasis in recent years, is our encouragement of faculty to adopt zero-cost materials for their courses, enabling every student to have access to required materials from day one of their classes. In the first full year since Hollins adopted its Levavi Oculos strategic plan, including the commitment to "to eliminate hidden costs and barriers to participation in the full range of learning experiences at Hollins," we achieved the following.

- HU sponsored a team, led by James, to participate in the Institute on Open Educational Resources from the American Association of Colleges & Universities. Thanks to this team's work, and to support from the Registrar's office and the Faculty Senate, we moved forward two key items:
  - Language is in development to give faculty credit toward tenure and promotion for creating or adopting zero-cost materials for their courses.
  - We captured, for the first time, information about how widely zero- and low-cost materials are used in Hollins courses. Because of other registrar commitments, we have not yet been able to review this data, but we continue to press forward with the goal of making open- and low-cost courses a searchable filter for students when using the online registration system.
- We had two faculty (Jacob Barfield in Physics and Nathan Lee in Film) selected for VIVA Open Adopt Course Grants (a \$2,000 stipend to convert a course to zero-cost materials), the first time Hollins faculty had received this award.
  - Five faculty completed our internal grant program to convert two of their courses to zero-cost, equaling the successful conversion of ten courses. We have four additional faculty in the midst of the exploration or conversion processes.
- We conducted the second iteration of the VIVA Course Materials survey in the spring. Only about half the number of students responded to this survey as in 2022, in the survey's first iteration. Most indicators seem to be moving in positive directions, with students indicating that material costs were no longer quite as significant or impactful as they were three years ago. However, we still see students making sub-optimal academic decisions (not getting a copy of a book; choosing not to take a specific course; etc.) because of material costs.
- Led by James, we created a Course Texts Checklist, <https://library.hollins.edu/textbook-help/>, to provide transparency for students needing help accessing texts. The checklist gives students options and names of people they can ask for assistance. This checklist will make its public debut in Fall 2025, and the Provost's Office will also include a link to the checklist in its list of syllabus statements provided to all faculty -- helping to put the checklist front and center for all Hollins students.
- We also recognize that not all courses will be able to move to zero-cost courses, and that we must provide options for those courses. To this end, Rebecca led a library team in developing a pilot textbook reserve initiative that will provide all required course materials on reserve for three select academic departments. Biology, French, and Theatre agreed to partner with us for

2025/26. In tandem with a newly purchased, user-friendly scanner, we hope these materials will provide access to students who might otherwise have gone without. We will closely track usage and feedback through the Fall 2025 semester and evaluate whether to expand this initiative to cover all courses in 2026-27.



## **Service to Hollins**

Maryke Barber

- Voting Coalition
- Leading EDJ
- Working Group on Slavery and its Contemporary Legacies

Isabel Folck

- Working Group on Slavery and its Contemporary Legacies
- Undergraduate Research Awards Committee

Rebecca Seipp Behnisch

- Search Advocate for Business/Finance search
- Leading EDJ panel participant on Search Advocacy

James Miller

- Hollins Team Lead: AAC&U Institute on Open Educational Resources
- SPARC (Student Performance and Research Conference) Committee: Panel Moderator and Digital Commons administrator

Sara Sprague

- Search Advocate for the Communication Studies search
- Administration of faculty election ballots in Qualtrics

Luke Vilelle

- Academic Renewal Research and Design Team

## Professional Development and Participation

Maryke Barber

- Attended the Virginia Library Association Annual Conference.
- Attended The Innovative Library Classroom Conference.
- Completed the ALA online course, Efficient Prompt Engineering for Librarians
- Attended the VLACRL Spring Program webinar.
- Attended an ACRL webinar on contemplative pedagogies and critical information literacy.

Isabel Folck

- Attended the virtual MARAC (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference) Fall Conference
- Attended the MARAC (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference) Spring Conference
- Webinar: Preserving audiotapes and videotapes
- Webinar: Finding Pictures: What's new in the Prints & Photographs Division?
- Virtual Caucus Conversations: Community archiving at the Ironbound Community Corporation

Coleman Holth

- Attended the Virginia Library Association Annual Conference.
  - Presented a poster session, "Undergraduate Student Work in Metadata and Cataloging."
- Participated virtually in ALA Core Interest Group week.
- Attended virtually the Online Audiovisual Catalogers (OLAC) Conference.

Jessi Hood

- Attended virtually the Access Services in Libraries Conference
- Attended virtually the Student Employment in Academic Libraries (SEiAL) conference

James Miller

- Attended Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference
- Attended UXlol Summer Meetup lightning talks
- Attended webinar, How to start using OpenStax in your course
- Published: "Creating a Micro UX Internship with Artifacts and Impact." *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 25(1), 11-34.

Sara Sprague

- Attended the Virginia Library Association Annual Conference.
  - Co-presented panel session, "Advancing Search Advocacy: Strategies for Equitable and Inclusive Library Hiring Practices."
- Attended the Association of College & Research Libraries conference.
  - Presented a poster, "Just Add AI: Thoughtfully Integrating Large Language Models to Support Research as Inquiry."
- Attended The Innovative Library Classroom Conference.
- Attended the Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy.
  - Co-led a roundtable discussion on AI use.
- Participated in mentoring program in the VLA New Member Roundtable.

Luke Vilelle

- Attended the Association of College & Research Libraries conference.
  - Presented a poster, “Placing small college library staff on the endangered list: Trends from national data.”
- Attended the Oberlin Group Directors’ Meeting
- Invited panelist for the Lyrasis Open Fair virtual session, “Engaging with Open Access as Liberal Arts Colleges”

## **Service to the Library Profession**

Maryke Barber

- Co-coordinator of LEO, our regional library instruction network
- Treasurer, and member of the Executive Committee, of the Virginia Library Association

Isabel Folck

- Member of the MARAC (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference) Program Committee
- Member of the MARAC Finding Aid Awards Committee

Rebecca Seipp Behnisch

- Member of the Resource Sharing Committee of VIVA (the state academic library consortium)

Sara Sprague

- Peer reviewer for The Innovative Library Classroom conference.
- Peer reviewer for *AI in Education*

Luke Vilelle

- Chair of the Lever Press Oversight Committee
- Co-Chair of the Mentor Committee of the College Libraries Section of ACRL
- Mentored a new library director in the College Library Director Mentoring Program.