



GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES  
**STRATEGIC PLAN  
PROGRESS REPORT**

**2021 - 2023**



GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY  
Archives

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# FOREWORD

When I joined the Gallaudet University Archives in March 2021, Covid was still raging through the country at levels encouraging the imposition of various restrictions on movement. This included the campus of Gallaudet University, which was still applying a full-time remote-work policy.

One of the few exceptions to the rule was the Archives team, which was working on campus five days a week, creating an exhaustive inventory of the entire collection for the first time. Although discrete indexes and inventories have always existed of various parts of the collection, this was the first time an actual, physical inventory recording specific items and locations was undertaken on the collection as a whole.

The inventory was necessary in order to prepare for a true first in the history of the modern Archives: The collection was slated to be relocated ahead of a planned renovation or replacement of the Merrill Learning Center (MLC). Although the Archives has been relocated before—most recently from the Edward Miner Gallaudet (EMG) building to the MLC in 1980—that move predated the significant growth of the Archives into the behemoth it is today.

Currently occupying an 8,700 square foot warehouse in Maryland and another 6,000 square feet in the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)'s Shared Collections Facility (SCF), the Archives represents tens of thousands of individual items ranging from tables and chairs to large sculptural works—and, of course, traditional documents, too.

The inventory had started not long before I joined the Archives as director, and of course, I saw an opportunity. Here was a chance for the Archives team to individually handle, identify, locate, and categorize every single item, box, or object in the Archives in a single project. Through this, we could come

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Gallaudet Research Institute  
(GRI)

# FOREWORD

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to know so much more about the collection: what it contains, where it has come from, and where it can go.

Within the first two months of my tenure, I had a five-year plan drafted and finalized within the outlines of a new vision and mission statement that sought to shift the direction of the Archives and allow us to better manage both the collection as it is and the collection as it will someday become.

That five-year plan, applicable through the end of June 2026, includes four goals:

1. Use various strategies to support and provide broad and continuing access to the Archives' resources to an ever-growing community of Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and signing past, current, and future researchers both on campus and off.
2. Manage, develop, and preserve Archive collections in accordance with best practices in collaboration with related units and experts within the Deaf community to assure historical value and continuity.
3. Undertake a transformative digitization initiative that supports the previous two goals while offering access to the multifaceted histories of deaf communities around the world.
4. Assure the highest standard of research assistance and support to researchers of signed languages, Deaf histories, and Deaf cultures of communities both in the United States and around the world.

Each goal breaks down into several objectives, which we'll examine further in the following sections.

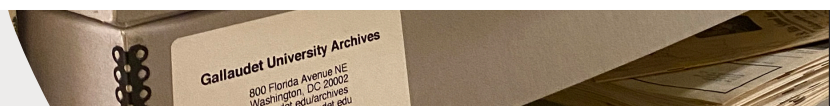
Originally, the goal was to release annual updates on our progress, including in 2021 and 2022, but the relocation project was fully underway in those years and dominated our attention. Now, in 2023, the relocation off-campus is complete, and we are settling back into a normal routine, and it strikes me as a good halfway point to pause and check in on how we're doing.

Looking back on what we've accomplished thus far, it's difficult not to feel a sense of pride in the team and their accomplishments. I hope once you've read through this report, you'll feel the same.

James McCarthy  
Director, Gallaudet University Archives



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# OUR MISSION AND OUR VISION

## MISSION

The Gallaudet University Archives is responsible for the institutional memory of the University and also strives to preserve the memory of the global Deaf Community.

## BACKGROUND

Given the nature of the University's mission, the Gallaudet University Library Deaf Collections and Archives works diligently to build, maintain and organize the world's largest collection of materials related to the Deaf Community, as well as the home to Gallaudet University's institutional records and the records of the Gallaudet family. Included in the collection are artifacts, photographs, films, papers, periodicals, books, and other items. While maintaining a comprehensive collection, the importance of preserving the records of the global Deaf Community and collaborating with other repositories to ensure the longevity of items is essential.

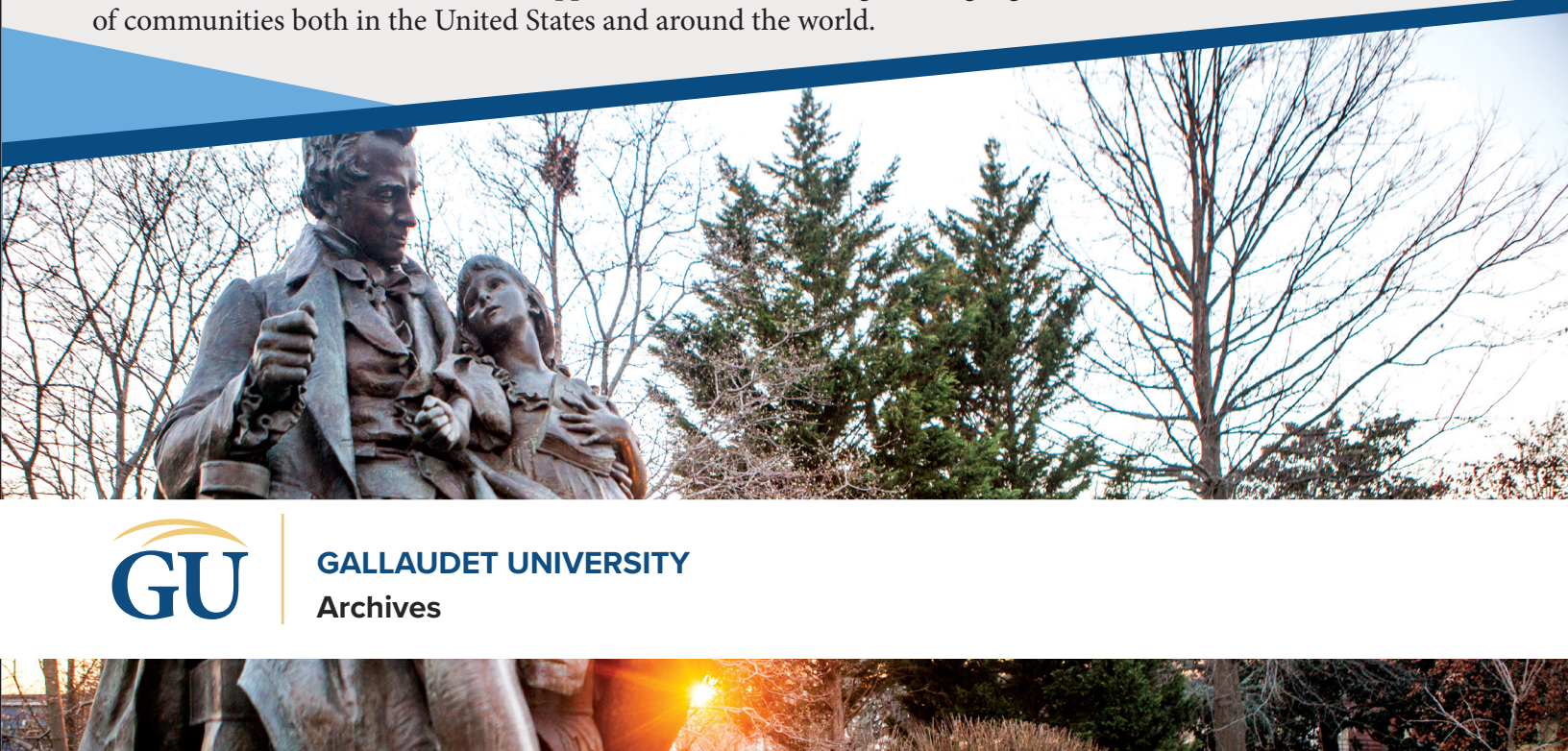
## VISION

The Archives recognizes that it is one of the world's leading centers of preservation, conservation, research, and access to the cultural memory of the global Deaf community. It supports Gallaudet University's mission of bilingualism, diversity, and the intellectual and professional advancement of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in a rapidly-changing world.

To that end, the Archives will 1) Use various strategies to support and provide broad and continuing access to its resources to an ever-growing community of Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and signing past, current, and future researchers both on campus and off; 2) Manage, develop, and preserve its collections in accordance with best practices in collaboration with related units and experts within Deaf communities to assure historical value and continuity; 3) Undertake a transformative digitization initiative that supports the previous two goals while offering access to the multifaceted histories of deaf communities around the world; and 4) Assure the highest standard of research assistance and support to researchers of signed languages, Deaf histories, and Deaf cultures of communities both in the United States and around the world.



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# FAST FACTS

# 2,000

ESTIMATED QUERIES

PER YEAR

(That's an average of 5-6 per day!)

# 71

NEW DONATIONS  
SO FAR IN FY23

CUBIC FOOTAGE

RELOCATED OFF CAMPUS:

# 30,000

# 11

PRESENTATIONS  
TO INTERNAL AND  
EXTERNAL GROUPS

# 103

RESEARCHERS SERVED IN  
OUR READING ROOM

# 120,398

PAGES DIGITIZED IN FY23

# 82

ARTWORKS ON  
LOAN TO OFFICES  
AND EXHIBITS

# 53

WORKS OF ART  
DIGITIZED



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# PROGRESS REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

The status of each objective will be evaluated on a continuum as follows:



**GOAL #1: USE VARIOUS STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AND PROVIDE BROAD AND CONTINUING ACCESS TO ITS RESOURCES TO AN EVER-GROWING COMMUNITY OF DEAF, HARD-OF-HEARING, AND SIGNING PAST, CURRENT, AND FUTURE RESEARCHERS BOTH ON CAMPUS AND OFF.**

## OBJECTIVES

By June 2026, the Archives will...

### Increase curricular integration with participation in active courses numbering at least four per semester.

Although we have given several presentations over the past two and a half years, this objective has not been met. Presentations have been given to a range of courses from GSR 210 to DST 497, as well as a special-topics course in digital history, but approximately half of all presentations were for outside groups.

**NO  
PROGRESS**

### Develop partnerships with at least two on-campus research centers.

In 2022 and 2023, the Archives collaborated with the Drs. John S. and Betty G. Schuchman Deaf Documentary Center on the following:

- The transfer of 10 videotapes containing oral-history interviews conducted by Dr. John Schuchman with Deaf survivors of the Holocaust.
- The collection of stories from the alumni of the class of 1972 during their 50th anniversary celebration at Homecoming 2022.
- Plans are currently underway to host another 50th anniversary celebration event for the class of 1973 at this year's Homecoming festivities.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

Other ongoing collaborations include:

- The loan of our Deaf Mosaic broadcast footage to a machine-learning project on campus that seeks to train a large language learning model on ASL to accomplish automatic ASL-English translation.
- Consultation with linguistics professor Dr. Julie Hochgesang on the ongoing problem with data storage and management—particularly in video form—which may be addressed by an upcoming project being undertaken by the Archives.



# PROGRESS REPORT

## Seek and find at least two external funding opportunities to bring Archives collections to the public.

One future opportunity for collaboration with the Schuchman Center includes:

- Grant applications for the following programs offered by the National Endowment for the Humanities:
  - National Digital Newspaper Program, to support the continued digitization of the Little Paper Family
  - Landmarks of American History and Culture, to support the Schuchman Center’s ability to provide a one-week training course in the collection, preservation, and accessibility of Deaf historical materials.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

## Establish a pipeline of future librarians/archivists, with at least one undergraduate student on course to enroll in and obtain an MLIS, using the following methods:

- Project-based internship opportunities
- Student employment
- Graduate assistants

Although we frequently get inquiries from students interested in working with us and our materials, budget constraints make it difficult to bring student workers onboard. Some are willing to work with us without pay, but the strictures of their course schedules and other obligations make it difficult for them to prioritize volunteer work.

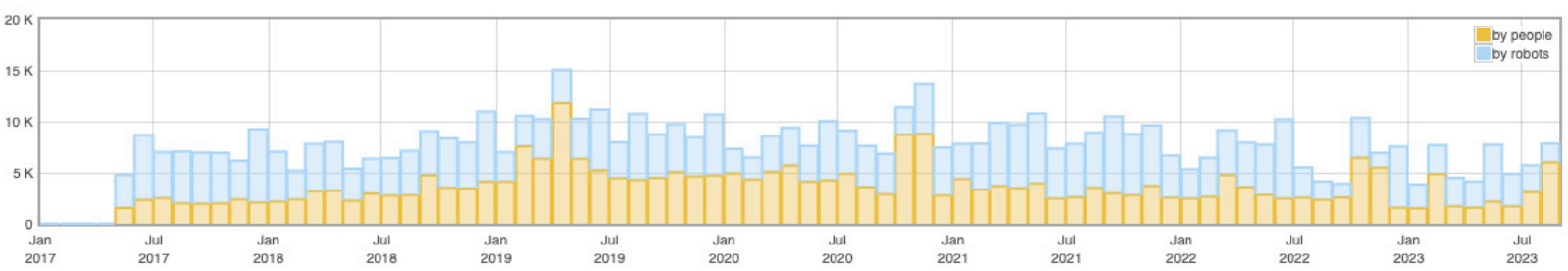
**NO  
PROGRESS**

## Update website to recenter Gallaudet-specific digital collections, increasing usage by at least 10%.

While the planned update was in progress, University Communications ordered a freeze on all major updates to existing webpages ahead of a planned migration to a new platform and design, which was completed in 2022. Based on the following statistics from our primary collection on the Internet Archive, this migration may have had an impact on our usage level:

**NO  
PROGRESS**

Views counted over time



Although there are clear spikes of interest, the overall trend reflects a slight decline in use.

*Continued on next page.*





# PROGRESS REPORT

Additionally, a look at our statistics on Islandora suggest that although there is healthy interest in some of our collections, there are a number of fairly significant issues with data collection that make it difficult to accurately determine a baseline. Here is a comparison of our usage statistics between November 2021 and today:

**Collection Usage Stats**  
Displaying 1 - 10 of 70

Label	PID	Page Views
Benjamin M. Schowe, Sr., Papers	benjaminschowe:2	358,051
Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1964	alumnincards:2	39,185
Gallaudet University Historical Photograph Collection	historicalphotographs:1	38,136
The Silent Worker	gaislandora:90	35,650
American Annals of the Deaf	americanannals:1	31,301
R. Orin Cornett Memorial Cued Speech Collection	cuedspeech:1	15,659
Deaf E-Collection	gaislandora:deaf_e-collection	6,752
The Little Paper Family	gaislandora:little_paper_family	6,256
Deaf School Newsletters	deafschoonewsletters:1	4,777

**2021**

**Collection Usage Stats**  
Displaying 1 - 10 of 71

Label	PID	Page Views
Gallaudet University Alumni Cards, 1866-1964	alumnincards:2	599,376
Benjamin M. Schowe, Sr., Papers	benjaminschowe:2	358,051
The Silent Worker	gaislandora:90	38,728
Gallaudet University Historical Photograph Collection	historicalphotographs:1	38,136
American Annals of the Deaf	americanannals:1	32,550
R. Orin Cornett Memorial Cued Speech Collection	cuedspeech:1	15,659
Deaf E-Collection	gaislandora:deaf_e-collection	7,298
The Little Paper Family	gaislandora:little_paper_family	6,899
Deaf School Newsletters	deafschoonewsletters:1	5,035
Gallaudet University Historical Slide Collection	gaislandora:guhistslides	4,642

**2023**

Some collections are tracked for usage, while others have remained at the same page-view count for two years. It's not immediately clear why this is the case, but we can see that some collections are tracked and used. We'll continue to monitor usage statistics, but between Islandora and the Internet Archive, it's clear there are some data-collection issues at play in addition to continuing internal changes to the Gallaudet website.

## **Integrate public-facing work with the Library and Museum in support of the goals of each unit, successfully completing at least two projects in conjunction with each unit.**

Currently the Library and Archives are closely collaborating on issues related to managing the Deaf Collection across its two components: the circulating collection and the Copy 1 collection. Additionally, the E-Resources and Instruction & Reference Librarian offered a great deal of support as we developed a system for managing our SCF collection.

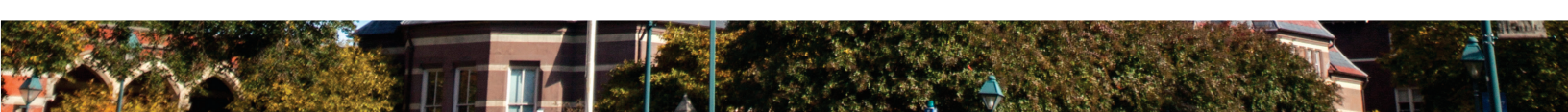
**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

The Museum and Archives are continuing to collaborate despite the Museum's reassignment to the President's Office. Projects include:

- Developing an online exhibition of Gallaudet's outdoor art installations using information gathered from a variety of sources
- Collaborating with Campus Design & Facilities on an upcoming refresh of public spaces
- Creating an Omeka site for the online exhibition of Archives collections



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# PROGRESS REPORT

**GOAL #2: MANAGE, DEVELOP, AND PRESERVE ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH BEST PRACTICES IN COLLABORATION WITH RELATED UNITS AND EXPERTS WITHIN THE DEAF COMMUNITY TO ASSURE HISTORICAL VALUE AND CONTINUITY.**

## OBJECTIVES

By 2026, the Archives will...

**Leverage the relocation and renovation processes to:**

- 1. Assess the condition of Archives holdings**
- 2. Develop criteria for future deaccessioning and acquisitions, potentially in conjunction with expert guidance (e.g., deaf historians assisting in evaluating cultural or historical value of specific collections)**
- 3. Collect information about the extent, nature, and distribution of the holdings**
- 4. Update or expand finding aids as necessary**

This is a complex objective encompassing multiple components, each of which is ongoing as of this writing; we have collected very detailed and granular information about the holdings and efforts to develop the following plans are actively underway:

- Assessment of condition and preservation needs for artwork and physical objects
- The development of a deaccession policy in conjunction with specific guidelines for ethical disposal
- The transition to ArchivesSpace, a collections-management platform that is allowing us to migrate and update our legacy finding aids as well as develop new policies and procedures for accessioning new materials. This includes a preservation assessment and processing priority assignment built into the donation intake process that should help speed up our ability to process new collections.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

**Develop an advisory board including Deaf historians, librarians, archivists, and other experts in culturally-related fields to advise on collection development, outreach opportunities, and research synergies.**

Individuals have been identified, but we are still in the information-gathering phase; policy development is underway, but not sufficiently advanced to submit to reviewers for feedback.

**MIXED  
PROGRESS**



# PROGRESS REPORT

**GOAL #3: UNDERTAKE A TRANSFORMATIVE DIGITIZATION INITIATIVE THAT SUPPORTS THE PREVIOUS TWO GOALS WHILE OFFERING ACCESS TO THE MULTIFACETED HISTORIES OF DEAF COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD.**

## OBJECTIVES

By 2026, the Archives will...

**Achieve the following percentages digitized of the collection:**

- **Film/video: 25%**
- **Artwork: 75%**
- **Gallaudet periodicals: 30%**
- **Photographs: 10%**

As it stands, approximately 20% of the film/video collection is in digital form, whether streaming via the Video Library/Kaltura or on DVD and DV/mini-DV tape.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

Digitization of the artwork is a little less simple; although virtually all pieces of artwork have images scanned and uploaded into Past Perfect, our museum collection-management platform, most are not of sufficiently high quality to be deemed archival. Efforts are currently underway to develop a photo studio that will allow archival captures of three-dimensional objects to occur; additionally, the use of our Robo-Scanner will enable the capture of two-dimensional media.

Gallaudet periodicals include everything from *On the Green*, our internal staff publication, to the *Buff and Blue*, the long-standing student publication. Technically, our yearbook, the *Tower Clock*, is included under this heading, as well as the various newsletters put out by the schools comprising the Clerc Center. Virtually all of it has been digitized at this point, putting us well ahead of schedule on this count.



Our photograph collection stands at approximately 185,000 images. Around 6,000 photos have been digitized thus far, and we are currently collecting quotes from third-party vendors for the digitization of our Portraits collection, which contains student photos from the early-to-mid 20th Century. That collection includes around 19,000 individual images, so would be sufficient to meet this objective on its own.



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# PROGRESS REPORT

## **Begin a campaign to collect, organize, process, and preserve materials from communities underrepresented in the Archives, ranging from marginalized groups (Deaf-Blind and others) to POC communities.**

This effort is complex and ongoing. Past years of collection development policy that practiced a status-quo sort of neutrality have damaged trust with those communities, and they no longer view Gallaudet as a “safe” place to deposit their historical and cultural materials. A number of different approaches are being practiced to rebuild relationships, including revisiting donor agreements, offering support in developing community archives that are not beholden to Gallaudet, and strategic purchasing when budgetary constraints allow.

**MIXED  
PROGRESS**

## **Investigate and create an institutional repository for Gallaudet-produced IP (e.g., white papers, policy position papers).**

Currently underway as of this writing.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

## **Evaluate and identify high-use MSS and SMSS for future digitization via a third party.**

Largely complete. However, we are bound by the terms of a memorandum of understanding establishing our main funding for digitization projects, which means we must prioritize specific collections. If any of the funds are still unspent after those collections have been digitized, we will be able to use them to digitize the high-use collections we have identified.

**COMPLETE**

## **Collect, evaluate, and identify born-digital objects, texts, images, and videos produced as Gallaudet-owned IP to be archived.**

Currently underway as of this writing. The tricky part is finding a place to put them (see the above objective focused on an institutional repository).

**MIXED  
PROGRESS**

## **Identify all on-campus units possessing their own “library” or “archive” and develop plans for either transitioning responsibility or providing limited support.**

Ongoing. Currently we have received a collection of research materials accumulated by the VL2; have received around 2,000 videos stored by the TV studio based at MSSD; have taken control of the video library previously managed by University Communications; and are providing ongoing limited support to the in-house library and archive maintained by Gallaudet’s Theatre and Dance program. Other collections continue to pop up around campus as offices relocate, address changing space needs, or are restructured.

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**



# PROGRESS REPORT

**GOAL #4: ASSURE THE HIGHEST STANDARD OF RESEARCH ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO RESEARCHERS OF SIGNED LANGUAGES, DEAF HISTORIES, AND DEAF CULTURES OF COMMUNITIES BOTH IN THE UNITED STATES AND AROUND THE WORLD.**

## OBJECTIVES

By 2026, the Archives will...

**Streamline and codify all policies and procedures for:**

- **Patron support**
- **Fee structures**
- **Staff responsibilities, redundancy, and support**
- **Communication expectations along the following lines:**
  - **Archive staff → Patron**
  - **Archive staff → Archive staff**
  - **Archive staff → Collaborator**
  - **Archive staff → Library staff**
- **Acquisitions**
- **Rights and usage**
- **Inventory control**
- **Collection management**
- **Emergency/inclement weather planning**

Another complex objective with many moving parts, but the following policies and procedures have been revised and updated:

- Fee structures
- Acquisitions
- Rights and usage
- Inventory control
- Collection management

**POSITIVE  
PROGRESS**

The following are currently under active review or revision:

- Patron support
- Staff responsibilities, redundancy, and support
- Communication expectations
- Emergency/inclement weather planning

Patron support for us includes examining the services that we provide, understanding patron satisfaction, and

*Continued on next page.*



# PROGRESS REPORT

developing new services to offer, or revising/expanding currently-offered services. A survey is due to go out to the community in Fall 2023 to begin addressing this.

Staff responsibilities, redundancy, and support is an ongoing process of re-evaluating staff job descriptions, ensuring that all services can be covered by more than one individual, and offering the support required to train staffers as required. The pandemic and then the relocation have resulted in three years without a “normal;” the end of the relocation presents us with an opportunity to reassess our positions and consider how our return to campus will also impact the services we provide—and who provides them.

Communication expectations range from how we work with patrons to how we collaborate with Library staff. It can often be challenging to work with a patron whose expectations don’t align with the reality of how the Archives operates, whether that’s due to an internal or external miscommunication. Patrons have expressed dissatisfaction in the past with our response times and with, in some cases, a lack of consistency in policy adherence. This review is ongoing.

Finally, emergency/inclement weather planning actually falls under the header of disaster planning and response. The past five years have seen the following events:

- A major mold outbreak in one of our storage rooms
- A catastrophic storm that led to flooding in parts of the MLC basement
- Several minor fires
- Ongoing leaks and ceiling collapses in the MLC

Although the university is in the middle of ongoing efforts to address several infrastructural issues responsible for some of the above listed events, it is also incumbent upon us to develop an effective response to disasters. This includes ensuring the presence and availability of emergency supplies, training in an established disaster-response hierarchy, and learning how to assess incidents and prioritize materials that need saving.

As part of this process, two Archives staffers attended disaster-response training in the summer of 2023, and training is ongoing. A representative of the Library to liaise in cases of emergencies will be identified and trained along with Archives staff to respond to disasters.



# CONCLUSION

	GOAL #1	GOAL #2	GOAL #3	GOAL #4
OBJECTIVE #1	Orange	Blue		
OBJECTIVE #2	Blue	Green		Yellow
OBJECTIVE #3	Blue	Yellow	Blue	
OBJECTIVE #4	Orange	Yellow	Purple	
OBJECTIVE #5	Orange		Green	
OBJECTIVE #6	Blue	Yellow	Blue	

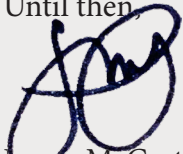
Across all four goals, we can see that specific, focused, and measured progress has occurred over the past two and a half years.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that strategic plans don't necessarily capture the full picture of a given unit's operations in detail. They're groups of high-level goals intended to achieve progress over a set period of time according to a specific vision and are not necessarily responsive to the baseline level of activity required to maintain daily operations.

That means things like the items covered by the Fast Facts on page 7 figure into this report only when those activities are responsive to the strategic plan, but it's important to note that those activities are ordinary, even mundane, for the staff of the Gallaudet University Archives. That they are capably fulfilling these duties while rising to the challenge of our strategic plan deserves all the applause in the world.

There is every expectation that the team will continue to push forward on the goals outlined here, and every reason to believe that next year's report will show the fruits borne by that push.

Until then



James McCarthy  
 Director, Gallaudet University Archives

