

Windows of opportunity



Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Erasmus University Library

Rotterdam

Mission, vision

"The University Library helps to create and disseminate knowledge"

This mission from the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 is still fully valid. The University is all about creating and disseminating knowledge: research and education are the core. The Library helps researchers and students to excel in this pursuit and to share the results with society.

Scientific information is the raw material for knowledge. The University Library has the ambition to become the University's content manager: to support researchers and students in obtaining, processing, managing and publishing scientific information. We make the results of our research in the fields of health, governance and culture accessible to every citizen. In this way we contribute to the societal impact of Erasmus University.

Approach

The Library strategy is not a set of goals, but of opportunities we expect to arise in the coming years. We feel that this approach can be helpful in nowadays world, full of uncertainties. Rather than a roadmap, the strategy is a compass to guide our choices in the years to come.

These windows of opportunity are short stories with a fixed format. These answers the following questions:

1. What opportunity does the library see?
2. What in the outside world creates this opportunity?
3. Why is the Library the best party to do this?
4. What in our environment makes this realistic?
5. When are we successful?
6. What is the effect for our customers / users?

The first question is about the window of opportunity itself: this can be something new, but it can also be an extension of what we are already doing. The second point creates the possibility: a development or trend in the outside world. Artificial intelligence, for example, is such a development. This creates opportunities but it is not an opportunity itself. The third question is about the competencies and qualities that the Library possesses, and which positions us to seize the opportunities. The fourth question establishes the relationship with the environment, the preconditions, which ensure that the identified opportunity also becomes practically feasible. The fifth question makes the intended result concrete and is about measuring the success of our actions. Finally, question 6 concerns the outcome: the effect on our customers / users.

The library Management Team has chosen this method, which is loosely based on *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* by John Kotter (2013). All Library staff were invited to identify windows of opportunity with the help of this question set in two workshops. This strategy, comprising four windows of opportunity, is the synthesis of the results of these workshops.

Window 1: Knowledge base for research impact

The Library creates a knowledge base for all research output of Erasmus University Rotterdam

EUR's Strategic Plan 2020-2024 is called "Creating positive societal impact". The University puts a strong focus on the social relevance of research and the impact that research can have on society. This is particularly important for EUR, as a central university in an international port city. A knowledge base is the source for the University's business intelligence in the field of research.

On a technical level, digitization continues to be a long-term trend. An increase in computing capacity makes it possible to process big data and artificial intelligence allows new forms of data analysis. These trends stimulate the development of a knowledge base of all Rotterdam research output: articles, books, datasets, but also citations and possibly also media appearances from staff.

This knowledge base is familiar territory for the Library. The Library already manages the knowledge base for the digital and printed collections: all books, journals, newspapers etc that the University has collected to support education and research. The competences required for this task correspond to a great extent with the competences required to manage this "inside out" collection.

Many building blocks are already in place: the Library manages the institutional repository, in which all publications by researchers at Erasmus University, including Erasmus MC, are registered. This spring, the library will launch the EUR data repository (Figshare), in which researchers can also easily register their datasets that underlie these publications.

The knowledge base EUR research is a combination of these registrations. By collecting these in one database under its own management, EUR has a powerful tool for its own business intelligence. It enables researchers to profile themselves with their research. Networks can be mapped, and new networks can be formed, for example with partners in the city.

The knowledge base is the source for research intelligence: new insights can be obtained with the help of artificial intelligence and text & data mining: where are the opportunities for subsidies, who are suitable partners, but also: what does EUR contribute to the sustainable development goals? The knowledge base enables the University to make strategic choices. By making as many components as possible available in open access, society can learn about Rotterdam research and build on it.

Window 2: Open content in online education

The Library stimulates open content in online education

The COVID crisis has accelerated the provision of online education. The step from online education to open online education is a realistic one. By allowing a much wider group than its own students to attend online education, Erasmus University Rotterdam can make an enormous contribution to society. A precondition is that the teaching materials in the online courses are also openly available.

Open access has been a trend in research for twenty years: more than half of Dutch academic publications are now freely accessible. This trend has not yet penetrated far in education. Lectures at EUR hardly use open access publications in their courses, let alone that they publish their own teaching materials in open access.

The Library can stimulate the use of open content in online education. The teacher decides which teaching materials to use, but the Library can advise on open options. We have a lot of knowledge about open access and we know what is available. We already teach students information skills to do their systematic literature reviews. Because the Library has been pursuing a 'digital is default' policy for years, most of the collection is already available in a digital format.

By offering the Learning Resources Repository, the library supports teachers in creating course packs and provides insight into which course materials are currently used in education. This is the first step in making this teaching material more open.

We are successful if more online courses with open content become available online and are also used, both nationally and internationally. This adds to the reputation of Erasmus University. In addition, we also contribute to a sustainable society. Mobility, necessary for classroom learning, can thus be reduced. This proved necessary in the COVID crisis, and it will bring closer the university's objective of achieving a carbon neutral footprint.

Window 3: New forms of delivery

The Library is committed to new forms of delivery of scientific information for education and research

The discovery services of libraries - such as sEURch of Erasmus University Library - are classic retrieval systems. In fact, it is the catalog only in digital form. New possibilities arise under the influence of artificial intelligence and increased computing power. The recent COVID crisis has underpinned the importance of e-only services. The need for smart, intuitive ways to deliver content to users has grown.

For the Library, this is a logical step after the previous strategic plan. We have already focused on 'digital is default', so that a large part of the collection is available digitally; 99% of the use of the collection already takes place in digital form. The Library has renewed its IT systems and brought these to the cloud. Now we have both the content and the platforms to shape this ambition.

It is possible to create user profiles of staff and students to provide them with customized information: for example, an alert for researchers of new articles in their area of interest based on their own publications. Students can receive notifications based on their study program. Though these services are much wanted, these will also raise questions about privacy questions (see window 4).

New forms of online delivery also mean that the traditional services in the library building are renewed. Instead of a place to find information, the Library has become a place to meet. Like the services in public libraries, not all services have to be exclusively of the Library. It would serve our users to make space available to other services, such as an IT helpdesk, or to student associations.

When building the collection, the distinction between "customer" (employee / student) and "supplier" (Library) could become blurred. It is conceivable that we open our systems for employees to order books for the collection without the intervention of a Library employee. Conversely, we could let students keep books if they request titles that have not been on loan for a long time.

We are successful when customer satisfaction with the use of sEURch - or successor - increases. In addition, the number of downloads from various e-sources is a critical success factor. The effect for our users is that they find their information faster and easier. We contribute to the quality of systematic literature review and in this way also to the quality of the research itself.

Window 4: Institutional memory

The Library is the institutional memory of Erasmus University's own history and identity

In addition to major trends such as internationalization and digitization, a countermovement is also visible, showing an increased interest for the local context and own identity. This paradox also occurs at Erasmus University. On the one hand we are an international top-100 research institute, on the other hand a university with deep roots in the city to educate its population. This goes back to the University's origins as a private initiative of a few prominent Rotterdam citizens at the start of the twentieth century.

The Library is committed to preserving the university academic heritage. In this way we can tell the story of Erasmus University and thus retain and further develop our own identity.

The library is ideally positioned for this role. As a collection-managing organization, the Library has the knowledge and facilities to not only preserve and present written and printed sources, but also other objects with which the story of Erasmus University can be told. In 2017 the Library already started a program to collect academic heritage, with the financial support of the University's Executive Board. This role will be expanded further in the coming strategic period. This also includes relationships with third parties who manage documents and objects associated with the University, such as the student associations and their historical collections. The University can also further strengthen ties with alumni through its academic heritage.

Whoever forms the collective memory also influences the collective conscience. The role of collection manager is no longer possible without a strong awareness of information ethics. Technological trends can also have undesirable effects: an easy spread of fake news, and the creation of an information bubble. The library sees it as its role in the University to share information free from any form of bias. This also concerns information from the more distant or recent past, which we now look at differently or which we now know is incorrect. It is a principle of information ethics to provide all information, in an appropriate context.

We are successful if everyone has access to all information available about the history of the University, from its foundation to the present day, or information that the university or its employees produced during that period in an appropriate context. This enables staff, students and interested parties outside the university to consciously use this information, enjoy it and form their own image of our University.

Collaboration

The Library is part of a network, within and outside its own academic community. Only with its partners is it possible to achieve results with this strategy.

Within the University

Collaboration with researchers, teachers and students is paramount. The windows of opportunity in this plan stem from the continuous dialogue we have with them. Each faculty has one or more faculty liaisons as contact person. In addition, the Library regularly asks out the needs within the faculties and seeks feedback to improve its services.

Within the support organization Professional Services, we collaborate with IT and CIO to provide the information architecture that is necessary to deliver our services. With the General Administrative Services (ABD) we contribute to new policy plans, for example in the field of open science and intellectual property.

The collaboration with the unit Erasmus Research Services is of great importance, specifically for window 1 "knowledge base for research impact". This also applies to the collaboration with the Erasmus Center for Learning & Innovation (CLI) for the projects within window 2 "open content in online education". Our project "Digital Open Educational Resources" is largely funded by the CLI from the resources of the national Higher Education Quality Programm ('HOKA middelen'). Education & Student Support (ESS) is also an important partner for us: we offer our services within the digital learning environment that ESS manages.

The registration and, above all, presentation of our academic heritage is done in collaboration with the staff of Marketing & Communication, which not only directs the University's marketing efforts, but also maintains relationships with alumni. We seek the collaboration with the Diversity Office when collecting and presenting items which reflect the institutional identity.

Within the city of Rotterdam

The Library attaches great importance to its network in the city. Foremost we value our partnership with the Rotterdamsch Leeskabinet. This Reading Association for and by Rotterdam citizens was founded in 1859. In 2021, we will celebrate our 50-year collaboration. We also have close ties with the Rotterdam Public Library: in 2021, in collaboration with national partners, we will organize the IFLA World Library Information Conference in Rotterdam.

Within the Netherlands

An increasing part of our back office is shared with other university libraries within the national academic library cooperative (UKB). We jointly purchase licenses, by which the libraries have made a

major move towards open access, and we jointly maintain the underlying knowledge base. We collaborate on national projects to further stimulate open science. Together we guarantee a wide offering within the collections of the Netherlands.

Outside the Netherlands

The Library is an active member of the European Research Library Association - LIBER. More and more subjects transcend the national context. The Library provides one of the co-chairs for the Research Data Management working group. In addition, a colleague from the Library has set up an international working group for innovation in the field of authentication to the digital library. Finally, the Library offers an internship in the LIBER Leadership program.

Via the Erasmus+ Mobility Program, the Library hosts an average of three colleagues each year from all over Europe. With their feedback, we hope to improve our services and to make them more diverse and inclusive.

Collaboration as a way of working

Finally, collaboration is also about how we work together within the Library. We believe that our colleagues are competent and work hard to make the case for the Library. This is the starting point for how we do things and how we interact with each other. We call this "working on the basis of trust". Core values are customer-oriented working, taking responsibility and working together. This way of working is further explained in the Library's Organization Plan (2019). These values enable us to work according to the Erasmian Values from the Institutional Strategy.