
The Indispensable Vanier College Library

Buildings, especially libraries, are symbolic. They represent the intellectual character and aspirations of a college, university or community. The condition of these facilities speaks volumes about what is valued.

Excerpt from Encoding Space: Shaping Learning Environments that Unlock Human Potential

Libraries provide resources that protect democratic ideals and help to eliminate misinformation. In an academic context, libraries are vital to the advancement of knowledge, understanding, and innovation; a quality library with well-designed spaces, quality resources, and library staff with expertise in information science is foundational to student success. A college library gives students a place to obtain knowledge, concentrate on their assignments and meet with classmates. The mission of Vanier College is “to provide a life-enriching learning experience that prepares students to succeed academically and professionally as engaged citizens of the world.” In so many ways, our academic library supports this mission.

More than twelve CEGEP libraries were recently renovated or are currently in the process of being renovated to reflect the Association of College and Research Libraries’ (ACRL) *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education*. The Vanier College library renovation was completed in 2017. Diverse spaces to reflect students’ study habits such as individual seating, group study rooms and a multi-use classroom were added. The Vanier Library is now a part of the Learning Commons, when includes the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Centre and the Tutoring and Academic Success Centre (TASC). These three areas work both separately and together to promote a positive academic experience for students.

To fully appreciate an academic library, it is necessary for students to learn about the value and beauty of library material. Moreover, the ability to effectively access high-quality and pertinent information in the digital age is a first-order skill for students of today. It is not easy to navigate through the many electronic database subscriptions, online

catalogues and shelves of books. For this reason, librarians offer bibliographic sessions in collaboration with teachers to respond to the informational needs of assignments, essays and research projects. Any copyright challenges, requests to access material that is not available at the College, and general assistance to anyone that walks into the space are expertly resolved through a short “interview” with a librarian or staff member. In addition, collection development policies can be found in every library. These policies describe the way in which library material is selected to assure the quality, reliability and accessibility of information.

The Copyright Act of Canada (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-42) determines the rules and regulations that protect the intellectual property of the creator of an original work such as a book, play, work of art, music score or film. Copyright falls under civil and criminal law in Canada. Monetary penalties and prison time may apply to any violation. In Canada, educational use (fair dealing) was prohibitively restricted. With the Copyright Modernization Act of 2012 (Bill C-11), teachers were given more flexibility in their use of resources. In Quebec, Copibec is the organization that makes sure the creator of a work receives payment for use of their property. Every three years, CEGEPs sign an agreement with Copibec and pay fees in accordance with the number of students enrolled. When the bookstore and the college report usage of copyrighted material to Copibec, the amount is subtracted from the fees already paid. Teachers are able to report the use of copyrighted material not located in the bookstore to librarians, or they can self-report to Copibec.

Through the Copyright Act (30.1), libraries have special rules that allow librarians to

make copyright easier to respect while still offering students the resources they need to succeed. Any course material can be placed on reserve so students can access books, articles and films for a short period to use in the library. Through the yearly budget allocated to the library, material can be purchased, catalogued and located on the shelves. Through inter-library loans, technicians can request material from other libraries for use by Vanier community members.

One of the greatest challenges to the survival of academic libraries is funding. Ideally, colleges should provide access to as many resources as possible. Financial support assures that our students will be successful world citizens. After they graduate, our students will be in competition with young people from all over the world, and currently, the digital divide is prevalent in Quebec. CEGEPs can and should be instrumental in abolishing it through investments in technology and creating hubs of learning – spaces for all.

Academic libraries, however cannot survive on their own. Teachers can contribute by adding library assignments to their courses to assure that students become more “information literate.” Not only will these skills help students learn how to use the library space and resources at Vanier College to enrich their work and their learning, but it will also provide them with tools to succeed in university and in their careers. Student success is dependent on a collaborative effort from the college community as well as the various spaces and services we provide for learning. Often called the heart of an educational institution, libraries should be recognized as indispensable and necessary.



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