AFBI Library Strategic Plan 2023-2027

Introduction

The Library at Queen's University Belfast has a contract with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to provide library and information services to AFBI employees via the AFBI Library ("The Library"). A four-year contract was awarded in 2023, with an option to extend for a further four years to 2031. This Strategic Plan provides the framework within which library and information services will be delivered in the first phase of the contract from 2023 to 2027. It is informed by the Vision, Purpose, and Strategic Priorities outlined in AFBI's Corporate Plan 2023-27.

AFBI's vision is 'Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy, and the natural environment'. Its purpose is 'To deliver trusted, independent research, statutory & surveillance science, and expert advice that addresses local and global challenges, informs government policy and industry decision making, and underpins a sustainable agri-food industry and the natural and marine environments.'[1] The Library supports these corporate aims by aiming to provide a high-quality library service with access to first-rate resources and expert guidance and advice.

At the heart of delivering this strategy are the University's five core values. These express our understanding of what we believe, how we aim to behave and what we aspire to be as part of an international organisation:

Excellence   We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.

Connectivity We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Queen's community.

Ambition   We strive together for improvement and innovation, looking ahead to see the bigger picture.

Respect   We treat everyone in our community equally and how we would want to be treated ourselves.

Integrity   We are open, honest and fair. We take ownership of the way we work and how we treat each other.

AFBI's Strategic Direction

AFBI's Corporate Plan outlines its strategic direction over the period 2023-2027. The strategic priorities set out in the plan are as follows:

- Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability.
- Protecting animal, plant and human health.
- Enhancing the natural and marine environment.
- Delivering Quality Outcomes and Impact.
- Enabling World Class Science through Excellence in People, Places, & Technology.

This Strategic Plan outlines how the Library will develop its support and services in line with each of these of these outcomes and ensure that excellent library services are available to meet the needs of all AFBI Library members.

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[1] AFBI, 'Our Vision, Purpose and Strategic Priorities'(https://www.afbini.gov.uk/our-vision-purpose-and-strategic-priorities)

1. Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment

The first three of AFBI's strategic priorities are centred on the three core science themes: Leading improvements in the agri-food industry to enhance its sustainability; Protecting animal, plant, and human health; Enhancing the natural and marine environment. Within each of these priorities, AFBI aims to meet its overall vision of 'Scientific excellence delivering impactful and sustainable outcomes for society, economy and the natural environment'. The section below outlines how the library will, through the provision of resources and training, support AFBI in working towards scientific excellence across its three core science themes.

1.1 Deliver First-Rate Resources

Aim: To maximise access to high quality information resources to AFBI staff.

The Library will provide AFBI staff with high quality information they can trust from the location of their choice. It will deliver resources electronically where possible, to support hybrid working patterns, and as a cost effective and efficient way of delivering optimal access across all AFBI sites, while also maintaining access to print collections that remain an important resource for some users. Although library collections will be sufficient for most resource needs, we appreciate that they may not always be comprehensive. The Library therefore welcomes suggestions for new books or resources, and will purchase where possible. The Library's document delivery service also ensures that all material required can be obtained and delivered to staff in a speedy and cost-effective way. Material can be requested free of charge from the Queen's collections which are discoverable via the AFBI Library Search. In addition, members of the AFBI Library can visit and use any of the Queen's University Belfast libraries.

1.2 Provide a Modern Discovery Solution for Electronic and Print Resources

Aim: To provide AFBI staff with a modern discovery solution that offers comprehensive coverage and easy access to relevant resources to support world-class research.

A new Library Services Platform and discovery solution was implemented in August 2023. This provides fast, relevant search results and visibility of local collections with real-time availability via a single search engine, anytime, and on any device. The Library will continue to investigate opportunities to make finding relevant resources easier, regardless of format. It will implement the latest features available and keep abreast of future developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on resource discovery.

1.3 Provide Innovative and Effective Training and Support

Aim: To ensure AFBI staff are equipped with the skills to use the resources available to them through the use of flexible training methods.

The Library will deliver and provide expert training and support on the use of high-quality information resources, ensuring staff have the skills to access and use the materials needed to support their research and the pursuit of scientific excellence. It will do this through the delivery of innovative services using the latest technologies to enhance the experience of using the Library, either physically or electronically. The Library will develop a comprehensive, online and in-person training programme that encompasses group and individual training, as

well as customised, asynchronous training to fit around the schedules of staff, delivered at a time and location to suit them.

1.4 Provide an Excellent Standard of Service

Aim: To deliver services in a customer-focussed way.

The Library will engage with AFBI staff in developing services and will provide a friendly, timely, and knowledgeable service that is flexible and responsive. It will actively seek, and act upon, feedback from AFBI staff through a variety of channels and methods – for example, the AFBI Library Committee and user experience (UX) activities - and place their needs at the heart of the service. The Library will maintain high levels of satisfaction with its services, gather metrics to assess performance, and strive for continuous improvement. It will continue to seek Customer Service Excellence accreditation and will demonstrate this standard in all aspects of engagement with AFBI staff, from face-to-face or online support and communication.

1.5 Deliver Value for Money

Aim: To achieve maximum value for money when providing services and purchasing resources.

The Library will maintain strict governance, fiscal controls and risk management. It will select resources closely aligned to supporting AFBI staff in achieving scientific excellence. It will work closely with resource providers to negotiate advantageous prices for resources on behalf of AFBI staff. The Library will maximise the investment in electronic resources by monitoring their usage, providing training, and promoting or removing under-utilised resources and targeting any unnecessary duplication in the purchase of journals.

2. Delivering Quality Outcomes and Impact

AFBI's fourth strategic priority, 'Delivering Quality Outcomes and Impact', focuses on the quality and impact of AFBI science. The Library will support AFBI with this priority by focusing on the expertise and help provided in the areas of open access, the AFBI Repository, bibliometrics, and beneficial collaborations and alliances.

2.1 Improve Visibility of AFBI Research

Aim: To continue providing support for The AFBI Repository, open access, and the promotion of AFBI research outputs.

The Library will continue to provide support for the AFBI Repository in order to collect, preserve and disseminate digital copies of AFBI's intellectual output. Library staff will also continue to promote open access publishing as a means of raising awareness, visibility and impact and provide advice on publishing issues such as copyright and article processing charges. The Library will promote AFBI outputs and provide training and support in bibliometrics to help AFBI staff assess the impact of their research.

2.2 Collaboration with AFBI Staff

Aim: To work in partnership with AFBI staff to support the work being undertaken in AFBI and scientific excellence.

The partnership between AFBI and Queen's University offers an opportunity to procure, promote and provide access to a wide range of services, resources, and training which underpin the delivery of scientific excellence. Library staff will collaborate with AFBI staff via formal committees, including the Library Committee, Open Access Committee, and the Contract Monitoring Group, as well as on a day-to-day basis as services are delivered.

2.3 Capitalize on the strategic alliance with Queen's University Belfast.

Aim: To build on the alliance with Queen's University Belfast by providing expert guidance and advice to researchers and students.

The alliance between AFBI and Queen's provides the Library with the opportunity to facilitate the sharing of expertise, facilities and knowledge to enhance Northern Ireland's ability to compete on a global platform in the agriculture and food security arena. The Library will provide expert guidance and advice, where possible, to researchers and students in Queen's University Belfast, particularly those in the School of Biological Sciences, the Institute for Global Food Security, and those who work with the AFBI community, including PhD placement students. This approach will support the development and expansion of the local and global agri-food industry.

2.4 Provide Support for the Long-Term Provision of Library Services

Aim: To provide support for the development of a business case relating to the ongoing long-term provision of library services for AFBI staff.

Queen's University Belfast was awarded the contract to provide a research library service to AFBI in 2023. The initial 4-year contract commenced in July 2023, and there is a contract extension period of a further 4 years up to 2031. Any business cases for the ongoing provision of library services will be prepared by AFBI staff. The Library will continue to provide the information required to support the development any business cases, including requirements specification.

3. Enabling World Class Science through Excellence in People, Places, & Technology

AFBI's priority to enable world class science through excellence in people, places, and technology, will be supported by the Library via the following objectives:

3.1 Embrace Digital Transformation

Aim: To develop a 'Digital Library' harnessing technology to deliver an exciting and dynamic experience for AFBI staff that is responsive, adaptable, and personalised.

The Library will further develop and strengthen its on-line presence, providing new opportunities for AFBI staff to interact with the Library. It will continually review its digital presence with a focus on quick and easy access to information resources, meet accessibility standards, and offer an easy to use, interactive and personalised experience. The Library will continue to keep abreast of developments in AI and its impact on libraries, implementing new technologies where appropriate.

3.2 Prioritise Library Staff Development

Aim: To develop library staff with the necessary skills and expertise required to provide high quality library services.

The AFBI Corporate Plan states that AFBI will 'attract, empower and develop staff to pursue excellence, embrace technology, innovation and change, ultimately supporting excellent science'. The Library will support the promotion of this culture by providing appropriate development opportunities, annual Personal Development Reviews (PDRs), and a range of work-life balance practices to library staff. Library staff will benefit from being part of Queen's University Belfast, a large organisation with opportunities for knowledge sharing among colleagues and ongoing training programmes for both new and existing staff. Where appropriate, library staff are supported in attendance at external conferences, training events and seminars. Support is also available to staff who wish to enhance their qualifications through further study.

3.3 Support AFBI Staff

Aim: To ensure that AFBI staff have access to resources and spaces that support their continuous professional development and personal wellbeing.

The library will enhance the wellbeing and development of AFBI staff by offering dedicated spaces for relaxation and focused work, fostering a balanced work environment. Wellbeing collections, including books and resources on mental health and professional growth, will support continuous learning and personal development. AFBI staff will also have access to other Queen's libraries, further expanding the resources and spaces available to them. By creating a supportive and resource-rich environment, the Library will contribute to making AFBI a more attractive and rewarding place to work.

3.4 Continuously Improve Engagement through Library Marketing and Communications

Aim: To raise awareness of the library service and its resources through marketing and communication to AFBI staff.

The Library aims to enhance awareness and utilization of its services, while also highlighting its impact and value. It will leverage various digital channels, such as its website, email, social media, library blog, and the AFBI intranet. Regular communication and surveys will be conducted to identify needs and address any issues. Additional feedback will be gathered through meetings with staff from all AFBI branches. Regular communications will be provided that will be tailored for staff at various stages of the research lifecycle or their careers. Analytics will be used to monitor the effectiveness of our communications.

3.5 Develop High Quality Library Facilities

Aim: To provide modern, fit-for-purpose library facilities.

A significant amount of work has been carried out on library spaces in recent years, including a refurbishment of the library space at Newforge. The focus in the next period will be on the library space at AFBI Stormont, where planning for a new Animal Health Sciences building is ongoing. Library staff will continue to liaise with the Animal Health Sciences Building Project Team to scope requirements for the library space. The Library will also continue to develop library facilities at Newforge and other AFBI sites to ensure that they continue to meet the

needs of AFBI staff. It will seek feedback from AFBI staff and carry out UX activities to ensure that all libraries continue to provide modern, fit-for-purpose facilities.

Delivering the Strategy and Demonstrating Achievement

This strategy sets out the plans for the delivery of library services to AFBI staff during the first four years of the contract 2023-2027. It will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated as necessary. The Library will develop an annual operational plan which will outline specific objectives and tasks. This will include the key performance indicators the Library will use to monitor progress towards successful pursuit of the strategy, demonstrate achievements, and address any aspects that are not progressing as planned.