B ringing in librarians’ perspectives on the 2020 Top 10 IT Issues is a natural focus for EDUCAUSE. The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), a joint initiative of EDUCAUSE and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), advances collaboration between library and IT organizations in order to promote the use of information technology to advance research and education.

Four library leaders contributed their thoughts:

**Karim Boughida**
Dean, University Libraries, University of Rhode Island

**Salwa Ismail**
Associate University Librarian for Digital Initiatives and Information Technology and Associate CIO, UC Berkeley Library, University of California, Berkeley

**Sarah Pritchard**
Dean of Libraries and the Charles Deering McCormick University Librarian, Northwestern University

**Keith Webster**
Dean of Libraries and Director of Emerging and Integrative Media Initiatives, Carnegie Mellon University

We selected three of the 2020 Top 10 IT Issues to represent the range of topics in which library expertise and initiatives could be important for an institutional IT program:

- **Student-Centric Higher Education (#5)**
- **Sustainable Funding (#3)**
- **Privacy (#2)**

For each issue, we asked the library leaders to identify challenges and opportunities for collaboration between libraries and the central IT organization.

### Student-Centric Higher Education (Issue #5)

**How are libraries working with the central IT organization to optimize students’ experiences?**

**Webster:**
I’m trying to position the library as the primary non-classroom academic space here on campus, with a recognition that the student life cycle needs different types of activities. When students arrive on campus, they are in a formative stage, looking for guidance on how to be successful and to find their community. At the start of the semester, we try to create an environment at the CMU Libraries so that students are primed for success early in their studies. As the semester unfolds, there is a focus on laboratory and group work, so we are developing high-quality group study and maker spaces that are strongly linked with academic programs. We see more demand for individual study spaces as exams approach, so we disassemble group spaces. Another perspective is that CMU students are looking for the same type of information services that we are building for our researcher community. The skills in working with data are so paramount that the library is becoming known as a central destination for basic data science skills. We will be introducing our first data science course from the library next semester.

**Pritchard:**
At Northwestern, libraries and the central IT organization have a strong, collaborative relationship that has evolved over the last ten years. Those of us in the libraries are working in an ecosystem where we are engaged in an array of outreach and partnership with multiple campus units. We are coordinating across diverse academic units that may have their own IT staff, so it becomes highly complex to initiate and maintain constantly changing relationships. We’ve also been restructuring our liaison program so that librarians can more readily expand beyond just acquisitions—for example, to research data support, digital literacy, and OER.

Even if all of us on campus ultimately have a shared vision, the work is decentralized across campus, and implementing the vision and consistent policy can be a challenge. The ecosystem is both the challenge and the opportunity. It’s both an amoeba and a jigsaw puzzle. There are multiple pieces that tie together, but they are flowing.

**Ismail:**
Libraries contribute a lot to an improved user experience as services are rolled out, ensuring that services are user-centric and providing a place for collaboration. It’s very important for libraries to coordinate with the central IT organization, and at the UC Berkeley Library, we’ve done this for a long time. One way is to
provide seamless enterprise access to tools. Libraries already offer many tools for research and teaching and learning, and the central IT organization can help. Also, libraries often work with other campus units on pilots and then work with the central IT organization to scale them. This work runs the gamut, from very basic technological needs (e.g., access to specific software, logging in, printing, Wi-Fi support) to more complex issues.

**Boughida:***

At the University of Rhode Island, we are now paying much more attention to student success and retention, partly as a result of less funding and partly because of how higher education itself is being questioned. The libraries’ role in student success is larger, deeper, and broader than just information provisioning and management. Student success and retention are part of our mission, and we are also trying to align with enrollment, counseling, and other services. Student success and retention will depend on diversity and accessibility. If we want to be ready for this, if we want to take diversity, equity, and inclusion very seriously, we need to consider how we are offering services and which services. This will involve repositioning and moving outside our comfortable box.

**Sustainable Funding (Issue #3)**

How are libraries developing funding models that can maintain quality and can accommodate both new needs and the growing use of IT services in an era of increasing budget constraints?

**Boughida:**

All of us in academic library administration struggle with the library funding model, and we are all trying to find a sustainable model. We have to reprioritize constantly. We have to work within constraints because the landscape is complicated. Colleges and universities cannot increase student fees and/or tuition forever. The library is part of the infrastructure of the institution, so library administrators have to work to support more and collaborate more. This applies in areas such as research and open data; we still struggle to find the best model to fund data management. But unless we have national help, we will never have truly regional or even national hubs for research data.

**Ismail:**

An important thing that libraries are doing is to account for changes in users’ behaviors and then adapt services so that library budget models can change based on users’ needs. As users change their behaviors, current services may not be so integral, so how does the library shift? One approach is to look at predictive analysis and trends—what is happening with services and patterns of use—and then tweaking the budget models accordingly. Funding issues are about not just sustainable funding but also efficiencies of scale.

There are also opportunities. For example, at the University of California, Berkeley, the Office of the CIO has launched a “Reimagining IT” strategic plan. Part of that plan is the “One IT” initiative, in which all of us on campus work together to advance the mission of the institution. This program works to ensure that we’re not duplicating efforts.

**Pritchard:**

Architecting a model spread across all sorts of budget categories and differing departments that make budget and personnel decisions in different ways at different times is very complex. In an area like data management, which may include a number of both local and external stakeholders, documenting who does what is perhaps possible, but ensuring that the work gets done is not. At Northwestern this year, we’re celebrating the 150th anniversary of admitting women to the university—an event preserved through print records. What about 150 years from today? At present, we have no long-term strategy for collecting and preserving institutional digital content. There is opportunity for a more holistic sense of archiving, but budget fragmentation makes that problematic.

This question touches on quite a range of activity. The challenge in our environment is that Northwestern is both very innovative and very decentralized. We are constantly caught in the middle of evolving enterprises. Historical trends also shape things enormously. New concepts, like digital archiving, take a long time to socialize. Sometimes we have to pick and choose an initiative—we can’t do it all.
Webster:  
I’d love to say that at CMU we have a sophisticated, multiyear approach to funding, but we don’t; we’ve largely had to be practical. From the perspective of areas such as data management, campus research, and information systems, my approach has been to formulate a business case with our provost (now president). This business case involved identifying the unmet needs I could see across campus and describing the cost of doing nothing. Recently I presented the first university transformative performance agreement between the large, commercial publisher Elsevier and our board. This agreement dissolves the traditional readership license and replaces it with a new model that incorporates scholarly research as an activity versus just readership. This is the beginning of a true shift in cost basis for publication of and access to journal articles.

Planning for future services means understanding the drivers of change today, in order to understand digital transformation. Almost anything is possible, but at a time of rising tuition costs, fewer research grant opportunities, and softening corporate sponsorship, how can academic libraries afford the future growth?

Privacy (Issue #2)  
What role does the library play in educating the college/university community about privacy issues?

Ismail:  
Helping to educate the community about privacy needs to be a collaboration between the central IT organization and other groups on campus. One key step is to start conversations with constituents to help them understand what their data rights and data choices are and help them make more informed choices as both consumers and creators of user data. Libraries also need to balance these questions with the immediate needs of using data for reporting and predictions while maintaining anonymity and privacy. Libraries are partners in many initiatives on campus. All of us on campus have learned each other’s strengths; coming together makes for a stronger institution.

Because the library is a neutral space—a trusted broker—I could imagine the library being the player that would aggregate data from across the institution.

Boughida:  
I’m the chair of the group for data governance at my institution, and I brought up this issue of privacy with student representatives. Many students were in favor of data being monitored to ensure well-being or to prompt mental health checks, but others were not. We need a balance between privacy, on the one hand, and access and openness on the other. Librarians often see privacy in black-and-white, but the issue is more complicated. I’m trying to be in the middle—valuing both privacy and student success.

Pritchard:  
The library has an emerging role of educating students and faculty to help them be good digital citizens. Students and faculty need to acquire the skill of managing their digital lives. At Northwestern, the library has been a part of two different grants—one related to learning analytics and another related to privacy—in which we have been interviewing students about their awareness of the data they are sharing through learning analytics systems and external sites. We’re also educating them about reusability, since many students are engaged in creating content and need to be aware of privacy issues related to intellectual property. We’ve been looking for opportunities to offer presentations, focus groups, and discussion sessions with students on these issues and to lead awareness in the policy issues of digital citizenship, “fake news,” and privacy.

Note 1: This is the second year that library leaders have been interviewed for their perspectives on the EDUCAUSE Top 10 IT Issues. See Joan K. Lippincott and Karen A. Wetzel, with Peggy Ann Seiden, Jeff Steely, Kristin Antelman, and Jon Cowthorne, “Library Perspectives on the EDUCAUSE 2019 Top 10 IT Issues,” EDUCAUSE Review, February 11, 2019.

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