Join Peter in supporting student success and the academic experience at the George Washington University by making a gift to Libraries and Academic Innovation.

[Web Link]

gwu.edu/give2gwlai

"I'm a night owl, so having 24/7 access to Gelman Library was a major help during my time as an undergrad at GW. I support GWLAI so that current and future students have access to high-quality study spaces on campus."

Peter Sacco, CCAS BA '15
“Y"our library is so vibrant!” I appreciate it when visitors to campus share this sentiment, something I’m hearing with increasing frequency, because it shows that we’re truly a hub for the university community. We’re far more than just a building, though. At GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI), we’re the heart of students’ academic experience.

By integrating teaching, learning, and research services, GWLAI provides vital support at every point in the academic life cycle. It starts with our traditional focus—research. More than books and databases, GWLAI provides the tools and expertise to discover new knowledge by using specialized software and targeted research consultations. When faculty bring that knowledge to class, we partner with them to design significant learning experiences for students through teaching and course design support. In the classroom, whether online or on campus, GWLAI ensures a modern learning environment with the right technology to engage students. When students are struggling, they know that they can turn to GWLAI services to find help, along with a supportive place to acquire new skills in our extensive workshop program. Finally, as students translate their coursework into practical experience, we encourage deeper exploration by connecting them to undergraduate research opportunities.

In this issue, we highlight some of our most important projects to support this full circle of the academic experience at GW. Academic Commons, a one-stop shop for academic resources and services across the university, is the newest addition to our academic support services. Academic Commons connects students to the resources and services they need to succeed through a website and in-person concierge assistance. An exciting development in our support for cutting-edge research is the partnership between GWLAI, The New York Times, and GW’s Program on Extremism to make the Islamic State (ISIS) Files available to researchers worldwide. These documents, collected directly after the fall of the “caliphate,” reveal the day-to-day bureaucracy and revenue stream behind one of history’s most deadly and well-organized terrorist groups. Working with translators and analysts, we will make these documents available not just to scholars, but to all Iraqi citizens, especially to those people whose history they document.

At GWLAI, we provide students with the tools they need for academic success, both inside and outside of the classroom. The philanthropic investment of our generous donors makes this work possible. Your philanthropy is our bedrock, and your support helps GW students reach their academic goals. For that, I offer my heartfelt thanks on behalf of the entire GW community.

Geneva Henry
Dean of Libraries and Academic Innovation

“By integrating teaching, learning, and research services, GWLAI provides vital support at every point in the academic lifecycle.”

Geneva Henry, Dean of Libraries and Academic Innovation

Photo: William Atkins/the George Washington University
When students entered Gelman Library on April 25, 2018, they were surprised to see a sea of green flags attached to chairs, study carrels, outlets, whiteboards, and many other items vital to the function of the libraries. Even the student employees checking out books were wearing green stickers. These 2,300 flags indicated just some of the items that were directly funded by the Student Library Donation.

Students don’t realize that many of the things they rely on from their libraries—from small items, such as scanners and new outlets, all the way to renovations that provide new study spaces—are funded through the generous donations of students themselves.

The Student Library Donation is a $50 opt-in gift to the libraries made through the tuition bill. It is a crucial source of income for GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI) and provides funding for many important aspects of what makes GWLAI essential to the student academic experience.

Support Your Libraries Day
HIGHLIGHTS THE IMPACT OF THE STUDENT LIBRARY DONATION

On Support Your Libraries Day, library staff showed their appreciation for student philanthropy by highlighting the wide-ranging impact of their gifts. Some students even shared on social media their reasons for contributing.

@MsTyMiranda
Why am I opting in for @gelmanlibrary? Because weekly meetings with @stemworksgw consultants have allowed me to learn software to increase my marketable skills in the job market. #StandUp #LibrariesRock

Students came away from our first Support Your Libraries Day with a cookie and an appreciation for just how much their gifts improve day-to-day life in the library as well as the recognition that they can help shape their academic experience at GW by supporting the Student Library Donation.
A high school student, Kara Zielinski, BA ’18, applied to GW with her eye on one thing: biophysics—the unique intersection of biology, physics, and calculus. GW is one of the few institutions offering the discipline as a bachelor’s degree.

Zielinski knew it was vital to obtain experience beyond the classroom, loading her for her first internship as a freshman. She spent the summer with researchers in Arizona studying disease-causing proteins with an x-ray free-electron laser (XFEL), one of the most powerful sources of x-ray. Zielinski fell in love with the research and wanted to continue, so Arizona researchers introduced her to colleagues at a similar research center in Germany, who then accepted her for an internship the following summer. For Zielinski, there was just one last question to answer: “How can I fund this?” Zielinski met with Dr. Paul Hoyt-O’Connor, director of the Center for Undergraduate Fellowships and Research (CUFR), and learned how to apply for the Luther Rice Fellowship, a grant that offers support for student research. “It was very nice to develop a personal relationship and the ‘insider look’ at what my application was going to look like,” she said.

Working with top researchers in Germany only opened more doors for Zielinski. She was accepted as a doctoral candidate at Cornell University, deferring for a year to return to the Germany XFEL lab, this time with the US Department of State’s Fulbright Program.

The Fulbright Program was not an Zielinski’s radar when she applied for her first grant, but Hoyt-O’Connor could see several steps ahead. “They’ll just show you a pathway and be happy to support you on every step of that way,” Zielinski said. CUFR remained invaluable as Zielinski applied to the Fulbright Program and to doctoral programs. “I’m pretty sure I emailed Paul every single day that summer while I was working on everything. I Skyped with him multiple times.

“I was working on three or four applications at the same time, and he was very helpful in making sure I was pacing myself on all of them.”

These experiences provided Zielinski opportunities to clarify her career path. She knows she wants to continue using XFELs to study the structure of proteins. “I had [my first] internship in 2015; the instrument itself went online in 2009. To be at the beginning of [this research] was exciting, and it’s going to be exciting now for my whole career...”

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Perhaps you remember the sticker shock of walking into the bookstore as a freshman and seeing the price of your biology or statistics textbook. With five classes to consider, one $300 textbook can break the bank. In fact, the escalating price of textbooks is a significant concern for undergraduate students, many of whom struggle to afford the $1,200 nationwide-average cost of textbooks and supplies each year.

GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI) is committed to “providing all GW students with access to an experience that reflects affordability, value, and transparency,” as stated in President LeBlanc’s new strategic initiative. GWLAI is working to improve short- and long-term affordability at GW through programs, such as Top Textbooks, and through the promotion of open educational resources (OER).

Now in its third semester, Top Textbooks acquires multiple copies of required textbooks for a select group of undergraduate, high-enrollment courses with traditionally expensive textbooks, and places them on course reserve for use by all students. This means that students needing a $300 biology textbook can choose to check out the library copy rather than put themselves in financial peril. Just in its first academic year, the Top Textbooks program has helped students save over $70,000.

The Top Textbooks program allows students in select classes to borrow their required textbooks for three hours at a time. (Harrison Jones, CCAS ’19/the George Washington University)

Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and helpful in shaping the program to meet student needs. In an anonymous survey, one user wrote, “Personally, the Top Textbooks program helped me tremendously. I used it for two of my classes last semester, and it helped me save hundreds of dollars.”

Another commented, “With the escalating prices of books, I think it’s absolutely necessary to have such resources available for all students and especially the ones, like me, who would have a hard time affording all of their course materials.”

In addition to assisting current students, GWLAI is looking to facilitate long-term change by advocating the use of open educational resources, which are high-quality educational materials available as no cost substitutes for traditional textbooks. Some GW faculty already use affordable textbooks and library resources as course materials, and GWLAI librarians actively educate faculty about the need for more affordable textbooks. They also assist instructors in finding and incorporating freely available materials into their courses.

To learn more about how to support equitable access efforts at GWLAI, please contact Tracy Sullivan, executive director of development, GWLAI, at 202-994-6929 or gwlaidev@gwu.edu.
Archiving Terror
WITH THE ISIS FILES

In 2014–2015, the world watched in horror as the Islamic State (ISIS) managed to gain control of an area the size of Great Britain in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Nigeria, and even the Philippines. Driven by an ultra-fundamentalist and millenarian ideology, ISIS subjugated, terrorized, and mercilessly killed its opponents. Its brutality is widely known, but much less recognized is its other tool—bureaucracy.

As a part of its “caliphate,” ISIS issued birth certificates and had a tax collection system, even a DMV. “The Islamic State’s capacity to govern is really as dangerous as their combatants,” says Fawaz A. Gerges, author of ISIS: A History. This bureaucracy, like any other, left behind a huge paper trail.

In September 2018, GW announced a partnership with The New York Times to digitize and make available some 15,000 pages of documents called the ISIS Files. These documents include land deeds, tax returns, military strategies, internal regulations, police files, grammar books, photos, and a myriad of other primary sources that reveal the inner workings of one of history’s deadliest and best-organized terrorist organizations.

Over the next two years, GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI) will work with GW’s Program on Extremism to translate the documents into English, analyze them, and make them available in Arabic and English in an open, searchable website. This public repository will allow researchers around the world, including those in Syria and Iraq, to access a wide array of documents that provide invaluable evidence on the activities and atrocities carried out by ISIS.

“We’re very pleased to be partnering with The New York Times to make these documents available to researchers worldwide,” said Forrest Maltzman, GW’s provost and executive vice president for academic affairs. “Access to these documents will enhance our understanding of national security issues and provide an important window into the modern history of Iraq and Syria.”

These documents record the history of the personal lives of very real people—people who have lived through unimaginable upheaval and whose safety is paramount. The documents will be fully translated and reviewed before they are made available online to help ensure that information that could harm civilians will not be published. In addition, accompanying expert analysis on relevant themes will be posted online so that the context is better understood.

“We are delighted that George Washington University’s Program on Extremism has agreed to preserve these documents and make them available in a responsible and transparent manner that serves history and the people of Iraq,” said Michael Slackman, international editor at The New York Times.

GWLAI is deeply committed to the preservation of the human record, and the promotion of its access. This public repository will serve as an account of genocide to aid in a better understanding of one of most dangerous terrorist organizations in decades, providing a sense of how such an entity runs a state and informing future policies to prevent the rise of the next ISIS-type of group.

Publishing these documents serves multiple purposes: from understanding how the Islamic State functioned to exposing its many inconsistencies in order to undermine its appeal to contributing to the restoration of rights infringed by the group,” said Dr. Lorenzo Vidino, director of GW’s Program on Extremism.

“We fully understand the many moral and security implications that accompany this project and are working to carry it out according to the highest standards. It is a massive endeavor that we hope will contribute to the preservation of the memory of a painful page of history.”

For more information on how to support this important initiative, please contact Tracy Sullivan, executive director of development, GWLAI, at 202-994-8928 or gwlibdev@gwu.edu.

Archiving Terror with the ISIS Files

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Imagine you're a GW freshman, just discovering the challenges of college-level economics, chemistry, or business administration. You've heard that GW offers many academic resources, but how do you find them? With services and resources spread across the university, where do you even start? As of August 2018, the answer is simple: Academic Commons at GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI).

Academic Commons is a one-stop shop for academic resources and services across the university. GW offers a wide range of academic support, provided by a variety of departments and divisions. Academic Commons connects students to the resources and services they need to succeed, wherever they might be located.

A new website, academiccommons.gwu.edu, provides 24/7 access to a wide range of support options, including sorting study spaces across campus by noise level, location, and available technology; making an appointment with a peer coach for assistance in 27 academic subjects; and identifying research opportunities on campus. When developing the website over the summer, GWLAI conducted focus groups and user testing to ensure it would provide the information students need in the way that they prefer. “These are the most helpful web pages I have found at GW so far,” said Andrew Weissman, CCAS ’22.

For a more personalized experience, student navigators are located on the entrance floor of Gelman Library. These specially-trained student employees listen to their peers and then guide them to resources, help make appointments, or walk them to whatever offices they need, anywhere on campus.
Academic Commons is closely tied to President Thomas LeBlanc’s key priority of the student experience. “During our student experience town halls, students kept highlighting that the support mechanisms we offered were great but hard to find. This was something that we clearly needed to address. Academic support is a critical component of the GW educational experience,” said Forrest Maltzman, provost and executive vice president for academic affairs.

Understanding this need, GW’s Student Association (SA) championed the idea behind Academic Commons, with SA leadership bringing GWLAI a proposal to create a centralized location for student support. “The expanded services and the new structure will enable students to access the needed support and guidance, fulfill their academic potential, and set students up for success,” said former SA President Peak Sen Chua, SPH ’19.

In the first two weeks of the fall semester, the Ask Us Desk was staffed with both student navigators and GWLAI professional staff. Together, they answered over 1,200 questions from GW students, faculty, staff, and community members. Even Dean Geneva Henry took on several shifts at the desk, helping students find everything from specialized supplies, textbooks, and course materials to math review sessions.

“Helping to staff the Ask Us Desk at the Academic Commons was an amazing experience,” Henry said. “I learned a great deal about the needs of our students, as well as the knowledge and dedication of our student employees. We are all committed to connecting our students to the resources they need to succeed at GW.”

The peer coaching (tutoring) services of Academic Commons are in great demand and have expanded this year beyond the quantitative courses supported by STEMworks to include over two dozen subjects. “Peer coaching is often a powerful mechanism for helping students boost their academic skills,” explained Dr. Kes Schroer, director of Academic Commons. “We’re building a supportive community that helps students to succeed at GW and beyond.” The first week of the semester saw an increase of more than 300% in peer coaching appointments compared with the same time last year. Schroer attributes this increase to close partnerships with academic programs across the university. “Faculty are helping to spread the word about our peer coaching services. They know that students benefit from these opportunities, and they want our students to be academically successful.”

As staff learn more about what students are asking for and how we can support their academic experience, they plan to make continuous improvements to Academic Commons. “We’re trying to create solutions for anything a student might want to know,” Henry said.

To learn more about how to support our student success programs, please contact Tracy Sullivan, executive director of development, GWLAI, at 202-994-8928 or gwlibdev@gwu.edu.

*Most requested peer coaching subjects in 2017/18 academic year:

- Economics
- Mathematics
- Biology
- Accountancy
- Statistics
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Other
- Business Admin.
- Psychology
- Astronomy
- Media & Public Affairs
- International Affairs
- Computer Science
- Literature
- Political Science
- Astrophysics
- Computer Science II
- Other

81.9% of peer coaching requests were for introductory-level courses.

1094 number of unique users requesting peer coaching service in 2017/18 academic year.

2848 number of peer coaching requests in 2017/18 academic year.

104 number of unique courses covered by peer coaching in 2017/18 academic year.

Photos: Harrison Jones, CCAS ’19/the George Washington University and Logan Werlinger/the George Washington University.
Dr. Sherry Molock has been teaching psychology for three decades. Just as she remains current in her field of psychology, she wants to remain current in the field of teaching. Supporting her in testing and refining her teaching methods are the University Teaching and Learning Center (UTLC) and Academic Technologies (AT).

“We partner with professors who want to assess and improve their teaching,” said Dr. Patricia Dinneen, director of the UTLC. “It’s an ever-evolving field. We research and develop practices that support active, student-centered learning and foster student engagement.” Each year, the UTLC offers a week-long Course Design Institute (CDI), exposing professors to active learning, and guiding them through the design of a new course or the redesign of an existing one.

Active learning techniques flip the classroom. More time is spent for discussion and other activities that allow students to learn by doing and experiencing, rather than passively listening to information being shared one way—the sage on the stage model.

Molock attended CDI in 2017. “The course was a paradigm shift for me,” said Molock. “It’s a completely different way of understanding learning and teaching.” Molock previously implemented some active learning techniques in her 35-person course but hadn’t thought that active learning was possible in a large class. “They gave us examples, and we saw clips of people doing it with 100 people.” But sometimes, instructors’ enthusiasm for active learning comes to a halt when they enter a traditional lecture hall. Chairs are bolted to the floor, forcing all students to face the same direction. The professor is tethered to the podium. While professors find ways to work around the configuration of the room, they can’t implement all the active learning techniques they’d like.

“This setting is not great. But I’m doing it,” Molock said of applying active learning to her 75-person Abnormal Psychology course, held in a traditional lecture hall. “I wish the students could get in small, more clearly delineated spaces.”

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“Me doing that models them doing it with each other. It’s a much better environment because of that.” To learn more about supporting our teaching and learning programs, please contact Tracy Sullivan, executive director of development, GWLAI, at 202-994-8928 or gwlibdev@gwu.edu.

Photos: William Atkins/the George Washington University
Journalist and political commentator Mark Plotkin, CCAS BA ’69, one of the staunchest advocates for voting rights for D.C. residents and D.C. statehood, donated his collection of papers to the Corcoran Gallery of Art and Corcoran Archives more accessible and easier to use because of the tremendous research value of these collections. Through a generous $158,000 grant from the Henny Luca Foundation, GWLAI is currently processing the entire Corcoran Archives and creating free digital access to significant portions of it. Researchers will no longer need to travel to D.C. to view the collection, but they can now access the history of this world-renowned institution online. The grant allows GW to share an exciting and important part of D.C. and American cultural history with researchers around the world, as the archive includes curatorial diaries, business records, photographs, and architectural drawings, as well as documents related to the famous Mapplethorpe exhibit cancellation.
Walking into one of the many instructional sessions held last year in GW Libraries’ Special Collections Research Center (SCRC), you would have seen blindfolded students holding books and attempting to determine the genre of each based on smell, size, binding materials, and other factors. This exercise, a part of Professor Holly Dugan’s course, Radical Books in the English Renaissance, is designed to help students realize their already deep understanding of the varied materiality of books. “It is amazing how much you already know about books and printing once sight is no longer a factor,” she explained.

Dugan was initially referred to the SCRC by a colleague, and when she began developing a course based on the history and culture of print, she knew that SCRC would be able to provide a wealth of great resources her students would love. She connected with Leah Richardson, research and instruction librarian for Special Collections, and together, they began developing plans for incorporating rare books into the course.

“The librarians in Special Collections have been absolutely wonderful,” Dugan said. “Their knowledge and care regarding the collections have been astounding, and I think the students gravitated to their materials very well.” The class worked with many of the early modern books from the SCRC, including Roger Marbecke’s Defense of Tobacco (1602), Isaac Newton’s Method of Fluxions (1737), and a 1634 bible printed by Robert Barker, a well-known English printer.

Not only were students able to learn about the general history of the books, but they also delved into the details of specific copies of these books, looking at them as pieces of material culture with stories to tell about cultural norms and technological innovations. Who owned it, who read it, how much it cost, and who ultimately donated it to the SCRC were all questions that were a part of their book biography research.

To highlight these research projects, the SCRC and Dugan’s class hosted a pop-up exhibit in Gelman Library. Students shared their findings—and the books themselves—with the GW community and members of the public, answering questions and providing a wealth of detailed information about printing and book production. “I think the fact that students responded so well to the collections and to Holly’s class demonstrates the many opportunities for classes to work with our incredible collections,” said Richardson. “I’m excited to see what possibilities are next for students.”

Students Discover Radical Books

Students share the books they’ve researched and their findings with the GW community at a pop-up exhibit in Gelman Library.

“I attended your Python workshop last Thursday at Gelman Library and I totally fall [sic] in love with Python programming. Thank you so much!”
—Yanjun Zhou

Free Workshops EXPLODE IN POPULARITY

One of the most popular services that GW Libraries and Academic Innovation (GWLAI) provides is its wide variety of free workshops each semester. Open to all GW students and faculty regardless of school or department, these workshops allow students to explore areas of interest and learn new skills that they can apply to their own academic research or to their workplace after graduation.

**NUMBER OF WORKSHOPS OFFERED**

|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------|

**MOST POPULAR STUDENT WORKSHOPS IN SPRING 2018**

- GIS Interface Basics
- Intro to Stata
- R for Data Analysis
- Exploring Careers at the UN and Other International Organizations
- Programming with Python

**HIGHEST ATTENDANCE AT A WORKSHOP: 90+**