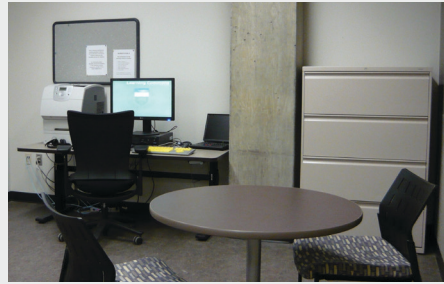


Supporting Assistive Technology

The University Library has always enjoyed a close relationship with Access and Equity Services (AES), the unit on campus responsible for facilitating accommodations for students who experience barriers to their education for reasons including disability, religion, family status, and/or gender identity.



The Assistive Technology Room on the ground floor of the Murray Library.

Over the past year, AES has seen a significant increase in the number of exams administered requiring the use of laptop computers, often operating with specialized software. With limited resources, AES has struggled to keep up with the demand. However, with support from library donors, the University Library was able to provide them with eleven new laptops equipped with voice-to-text and text-to-voice software that helps AES meet this growing demand from students.

These laptops not only reduce the university's reliance on employing readers or scribes during exam time, but also offer students access to technology that they might not otherwise have.



Maxine Kinakin

"AES is committed to providing the best possible support to our students, particularly those who require accessibility accommodations," says Maxine Kinakin, Director of AES. "This generous support from the library and its donors is a significant step towards our goal of creating an equitable and supportive learning environment for all our students."♥

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BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS**

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For more information on how you can support the University Library, contact:

Luke Muller,
Director, External Engagement
(306) 966-1192
luke.muller@usask.ca



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Dean's Message



The 'waterfall' window during installation.

The fall semester is coming to a close, and it's no surprise that the University Library has been a hub of activity for our university community. In particular, our Murray Library has been a lively space, undergoing considerable renovation and rejuvenation.

If you've been on campus lately, you may have noticed two new 'waterfall' windows running down the north and south sides of the building, spanning the 3rd to 6th floors. They are impressive to look at – and through – brightening library spaces and providing an incredible view of campus, the riverbank, and neighbouring communities.

We are also making progress on the renovation and relocation of University Archives and Special Collections, which is moving from the 3rd floor of the Murray Library to the 5th floor. We expect this exciting project to be complete in 2026.

There are other transformations underway in the library, including the development of an innovative and popular new space called the Low-Sensory Study Room. This student-focused study space, which was made possible partially through the generosity of library donors, is designed to support students with sensitivities to a range of sensory stimuli, such as sound, light, and smell. You will read about how our partnership with the university's Access and Equity Services office inspired the development of this new space and how our donors helped make it all possible.

There are other stories that I hope remind you of the enormous impact our donors continue to have in our library and across our campus. I encourage you to reach out anytime to talk more about your University Library and the ways in which your support is making a difference.

As always, thank you so much for all you do for the University Library – I look forward to talking to you soon. ♥



Sincerely,

Charlene

Charlene Sorensen
Interim Dean, University Library

A New Low-Sensory Study Room



With approximately 3,000 USask students registered with the Access and Equity Services (AES), nearly half face mental health challenges, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, learning disabilities, depression, and autism spectrum disorder. For these students, navigating campus life can sometimes feel overwhelming, so having spaces specifically designed to meet sensory needs can make a significant difference in their academic experience.

This is why the University Library created the Low-Sensory Study Room (LSSR) at the Murray Library. The LSSR

takes over the space formerly designated as the Quiet Study Room on the 1st floor of the Murray Library north wing. The space has been expanded and now includes 45 seats with a variety of seating options that can be configured in different ways to ensure privacy and limit sensory inputs.

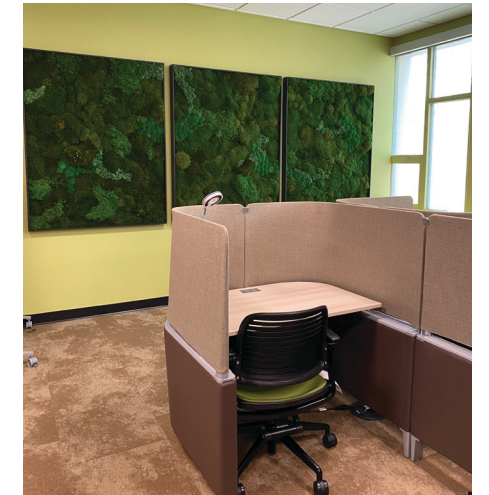
"This is a significant step towards fostering an inclusive, accessible environment for all students," says interim dean Charlene Sorensen. "This thoughtfully designed space is more than just a renovation; it's a testament to the library's commitment to student inclusivity, accessibility, and mental well-being."

One of the key features of the LSSR is its approach to lighting, which is zoned, dimmable, and offers students individual, user-controlled task lights at each seat. The room's natural light further enhances the sense of calm, and the self-sustaining moss wall, sound-absorbing carpet and wall tiles, and acoustic panels further minimize sensory disruptions.

Every seat in the LSSR is also equipped with its own power outlet, recognizing the ever-present need for device charging in a modern study environment. Seating options include typical study carrels for those who prefer a traditional setup, as well as mobile stools paired with



Study carrels have individual lighting.



A self-sustaining moss wall contributes to sound dampening.

height-adjustable tables to accommodate varied study styles. The room encourages a "choose-your-own-comfort" approach, allowing students to find their preferred setup and lighting so they can focus on their work.

"Students played an essential role in shaping the room," says Sorensen. "From the selection of furniture to the choice of colours, the library actively sought student feedback at every step. By prioritizing sensory accessibility, the space represents a model for future academic environments that aspire to be both inclusive and supportive." ♥

Decolonizing the Library

In a September 2023 project connected to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, the library was one of the colleges to weave orange ribbons into three blankets in the shape of a star, honouring the children who died in Indian Residential Schools. This September, one of

the three projects was framed in a shadow box and displayed as part of a gallery walk during the university's Week of Reflection. The project can be viewed at the ground-floor entrance of the Murray Library. ♥

