

2025-2026
Annual Report
of the
Bowdoin College Library



Welcome

The 2025-2026 academic year was a period of transition and renewal for the Bowdoin College Library, distinguished by an unexpected leadership change, significant internal promotions and staffing changes, and focused work to strengthen organizational culture and service infrastructure.

We worked together to craft a vision statement to inspire us and we defined the values that guide our work. This introspective work informed the development of new strategic priorities that will shape our future over the next three years. As you will read, we made significant progress in our priority areas throughout this transformative year.

Vision

We will cultivate **intentional curiosity** and **generous enthusiasms** by enriching the hearts, souls, and minds of our community in all scholarly, civic, and creative pursuits.

Values

Nurturing Curiosity

We bring to our work—and inspire in others—the restless curiosity necessary to seek new knowledge, contextualize information, and engage with complex realities.

Championing Integrity

We work together to teach ethical research, safeguard trust in credible sources of information, protect the privacy of anyone using the Library, and provide reliable and equitable access to all that the Library has to offer.

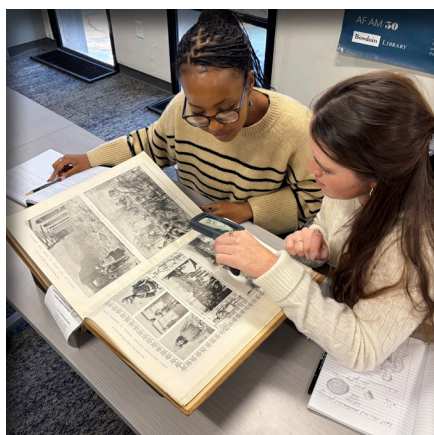
Cultivating Stewardship

By investing in our staff, fostering community, and designing inclusive collections, services, and spaces, we steward relationships and resources for current and future generations.

Priority 1

To Spark Curiosity within our Community and for Ourselves

The Library's research and instruction team, including those in Special Collections & Archives, offered **2,713** reference consultations and **242** instructional sessions with a total attendance of **3,717** students, meaning most Bowdoin students participated in more than one library instructional session this past year. Research and instruction librarians continue to play a vanguard role in engaging students and faculty on topics of AI and particularly its research potential.



"As they handle objects created by and preserved by the generations before them, students are made powerfully aware of the materiality of the past, and are fascinated by the lives of those who made and used these objects. Encouraged to look closely with the thoughtful guidance of library staff, questions quickly emerge, beginning with curiosity about how things were created and how they were used, and opening up questions of how the feelings and needs of the past both differ from and connect to the present."

– Pamela Fletcher, Edith Cleaves Barry Professor of the History and Criticism of Art

Students (left) in ARTH 2115/DCS 2610: New Media from the 19th Century to Now during an instructional session in the Special Collections Learning Lab.

Librarians and IT staff jointly developed a self-paced online course at the request of the faculty focused on the responsible and ethical use of Generative AI. Completed by **641** students, it is also used by faculty and staff and nationally as part of the NERCOMP AI Leadership Academy. This project has been presented at numerous regional and national conferences to great acclaim. A public version of the course has been downloaded **31** times by other institutions.

"[This course] is a critical educational tool that can help the Bowdoin population navigate the churning waters of AI more ethically and efficiently."

—Eric Chown, Sarah and James Bowdoin Professor of Digital and Computational Studies & Director of The Hastings Initiative for AI and Humanity



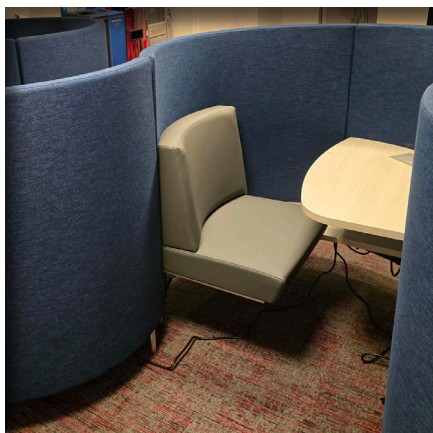
Priority 2

Library Space that Supports People

The Library is a critical third space. Being together—to study, to collaborate, or to just support one another in a comfortable space—is more important than it ever has been.

This year, the Library received **327,819** visits across the main library and three branches. The vast majority of these visits came from students, representing an **11%** increase over last year. On a typical evening, groups of students head straight from the dining halls to the library, often filling every seat on the first floor. Hawthorne-Longfellow Library is open over **100 hours** every week to accommodate their diverse study habits and schedules.

Access to shared resources continues to be a top priority for the Library. Course reserves, including films in Media Commons, textbooks, and literature across all libraries, were loaned a total of **3,727** times. Media production and viewing equipment were loaned a total of **1,314** times from Media Commons.



With a new building on the horizon, we focused on modest space improvements that make a big impact. The Electronic Classroom has been redesignated the Bartlett Classroom and outfitted with purpose-driven furniture and modern teaching and learning equipment, while the Vending Cafe has been repurposed as an additional quiet study room. Don't worry—the vending machines are still nearby.

Eight new study pods, chosen with student input and installed in H-L over the summer, are anticipated to be a popular place to study in the upcoming academic year.

*Curious about the campus plan
for the Library? Learn more here.*



Priority 3

Assess Collections of the *Present* to Prepare for the Library of the *Future*

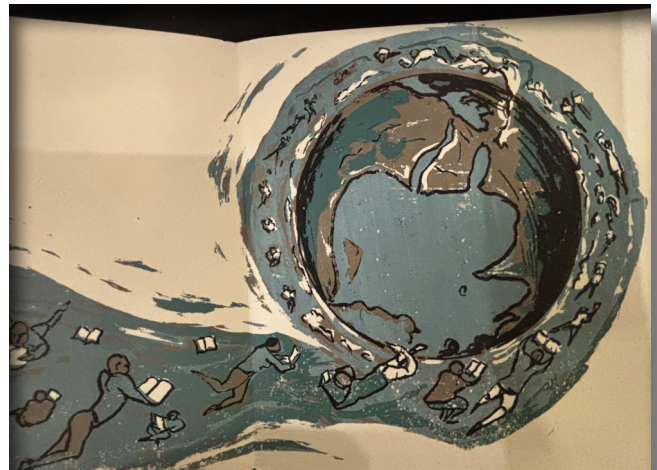
This year, we expanded electronic access by purchasing major e-book and journal archives, investments that reduce dependence on escalating subscription fees and ensure continuity of access, in addition to saving precious space where there is little to spare. Where appropriate, we began modest print withdrawals, reducing crowding in current facilities and setting the stage for future moves, including a planned expansion to the Annex space, and eventually to a new or completely renovated main library.

Physical collections	Number of volumes
Hawthorne-Longfellow Library	553,163
Hubbard Stacks	173,899
The Annex	106,304
Hatch Science Library	54,150
Beckwith Music Library	19,068
Pierce Art Library	13,940

E-collections	Number of volumes
E-books	3,608,783
Serials	331,204

We received several extraordinary collections for Special Collections & Archives over the last year. Among the most notable is the **Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here Project**. Envisioned and assembled by California-based poet Beau Beausoleil, the collection includes more than 500 artist's books and broadsides created by artists in response to the 2007 car bombing of Al-Mutanabbi Street, which decimated Baghdad's historic bookseller's district.

Other notable gifts include significant literary first editions, including James Joyce's **Ulysses**, Ezra Pound's **Des Imagistes**, Ernest Hemingway's **For Whom the Bell Tolls**, and two extraordinary Audubon titles, **The Quadrupeds of North America** (1849-1954) and the first octavo edition of **The Birds of America** (1840-1844).



Part of a broadside from the Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here Project.

Priority 4

Advocacy, Communication, and Engagement

The Library expanded its engagement and visibility on campus and beyond.

We launched **The Biblio File**, a monthly newsletter highlighting services, collections, and events for the Bowdoin community, and reimaged **O’Pine** as a semi-annual newsletter for donors and broader public audiences.

1,814 people attended **54** events, driven by our most popular event series, Faculty Book Launches and the Audubon Page-Turning. We also piloted new community-building programs (poetry readings, silent reading group, film nights, and finals stress-relief events), along with a self-guided H-L tour for Reunion and a bike share program with the Sustainability Office. Since the program’s launch in October, the bikes have been borrowed a total of **233** times.

The Audubon Page-Turning event achieved two remarkable milestones: its ten-year anniversary, and the final page-turning of volume one. The event continues with volume two of Audubon’s Birds of America, now on display in the Special Collections & Archives Reading Room for the first time.



“Something really cool [is] taking place in the Special Collections Library...There is something wonderful about it.

Librarians turn a single page of the book to limit each print’s exposure to sunlight. They started inviting Bowdoin students, faculty, and staff as well as the public to watch the turning in 2016. Now it’s become one of the quirkiest but most delightful traditions in Maine, with an appeal that even the organizers can’t quite explain.”

Watch SCA staff reminisce about the 100 page-turnings past as they flip all the way back to the beginning of volume 1.



—Rob Caldwell, “This is one of the quirkiest traditions in Maine—and it’s magical,” June 10, 2026 episode of 207 about the Audubon page-turnings.



*Sign up to receive
O’Pine: generous enthusiasms
for all readers, in all lands.*



*Sign up to receive
The Biblio File: tips & tricks
for students, faculty, and staff.*

New & Notable

“Educational resources shouldn’t be locked behind a barrier—they should be available to people all over the world.”

—Justin Zhang ‘29

Interlibrary Loan Accessibility Efforts

Charlotte Clements ‘26 brought the ILL website into WCAG 2.2 AAA conformance, the highest possible grade for accessibility standards. She also implemented ILL’s on-demand OCR request service.

Justin Zhang ‘29 joined ILL this year to support the RSCVD program—Resource Sharing Collaborative and Voluntary Document Delivery—delivering materials to researchers in conflict zones, authoritarian regimes, and under financial hardship.

Information Literacy

Research and instruction librarians developed inclusive, discipline-aware research learning goals that will strengthen critical, ethical engagement with information in all formats across all stages of the research process. At Bowdoin, information literacy is shared, community work—much like a mycorrhizal network—rooted in respect for each other and the joyful exploration of a complex information ecosystem, including generative AI where appropriate.



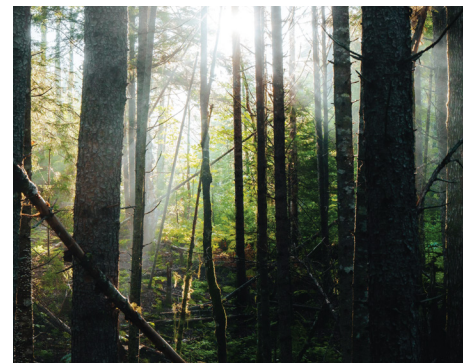
Leon Strout Photos

Beginning in 2025, a donor-funded effort to arrange, describe, and digitize more than 6,000 photographs by Brunswick native Leon B. Strout has been wildly successful. Outreach efforts have resulted in additional Strout papers and photographs coming to Bowdoin and a feature on News Center Maine’s 207 evening show, culminating in a 10-month extension of the project. An illustrated scholarly catalogue will accompany the Spring-Summer 2026 exhibition on his work, the manuscript for which is currently at the printer.

Left: Strout’s portrait of Joshua Chamberlain and his dog, Tiberius Caesar, in 1911.

Beyond the Claims

The Library partnered with Wabanaki REACH to open a new truth-telling initiative, “Beyond the Claims: Stories from the Land & the Heart.” Interviews from Wabanaki elders, Tribal Chiefs, legislators, lawyers, commissioners, poets, and culture keepers speak to the impact of the Maine Indian land claims and Maine Indian Claims Settlement Act (MICA) over generations. The Library provides access to this collection and the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission archive through our Digital Collections.



Our Impact by the Numbers

41,184 check outs

through Circulation and Interlibrary Loan

11,921 loaned

items through ILL
as well as 6,922 borrowed

347,616 searches

conducted in Compass, our online catalog

40 student-led

exhibits, events, and collections



Student-led exhibits & events included the Joshua Chamberlain display (left), curated by students of the Bowdoin Preservation Collective; the Printed Book Pop-Up Exhibit (center), featuring work by students of VART 2203; and Vibes with Neiman (right), with Neiman Mocombe '26.

Closing Thoughts

from Maxwell Payne, class of 2026

*I started working in the Interlibrary Loan Department the first week of my freshman year and continued throughout the rest of my college experience, while also working in the Circulation Department starting in my sophomore spring. **Working at the library was one of the best parts of my Bowdoin experience and taught me numerous skills while allowing me to help my community.** In Interlibrary Loan, I often worked on the most difficult requests, where sometimes I had to contact libraries or authors from around the world to get a piece of material for one of our patrons. Through those experiences, I learned how to navigate copyright law across countries, how to work and communicate with librarians from across the world to help each other, and how to problem solve. That last skill, problem solving, I had to exercise daily, both in simpler tasks and difficult material searches. In some of the simpler tasks like printing labels for books to be checked out and supplying electronic articles to partner libraries I often encountered difficulties that I had to work around or fix. My difficult material searches were often full of conflicting information and dead ends, but I learned that if I kept searching and looking for leads I would usually be able to obtain what our user wanted. **The best part of every material request was when, sometimes after months of work, I got to hold a book in my hands or view a pdf file sent from the other side of the world. I knew that I would then be able to give a user material that would aid their Honors Thesis, Faculty Research, or simply add to their understanding of the world. I loved every second of my time in the library and am thankful for being able to work in a great place with such kind people.***