

How TUG began:

The libraries at the University of Guelph, the University of Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier University have enjoyed a long history of co-operation. For years, users have been permitted to borrow materials from any of the three libraries, returning them to the library closest at hand. An efficient interlibrary loan service has helped expedite the exchange of library materials, and each library has made a practice of considering the holdings of the other two before acquiring expensive, non-core materials or cancelling subscriptions.

[Wilfrid Laurier University](#), the smallest institution in the group, is the oldest, established in 1924. Laurier has academic strengths in business, social work, and music.

Founded in 1957, the [University of Waterloo](#) is world famous for its programmes in computer science and has major strengths in engineering, mathematics, and psychology.

The [University of Guelph](#) was founded in 1964, based on colleges dating back to the late nineteenth century. Guelph is known nationally for its programmes in agriculture, veterinary medicine, and applied life sciences.

In the '90s, a time when universities in Ontario were experiencing unprecedented fiscal constraint, the three libraries found themselves facing a number of common problems. There was increasing pressure to replace ageing or inadequate computer systems. Space was an issue at all three libraries: Laurier was packed to the roof and Guelph and Waterloo were well on their way to filling both their main buildings and additional rented storage space. The weak Canadian dollar and soaring prices were necessitating major serials cancellations. Librarians at the three institutions agreed that the best way to move forward was to collaborate.

Their timing was right. Technological advances were making greater collaboration among institutions possible. The provincial government had begun to offer financial incentives to encourage inter-institution collaboration. There were new presidents at all three universities: Mordechai Rozanski at Guelph, James Downey at Waterloo, and Lorna Marsden at Laurier. In February 1995, the presidents of the three universities signed an agreement to collaborate on a series of joint library projects and initiatives. The goal of the TriUniversity Group of Libraries (TUG) is to work toward an integrated programme of library collections and services.

The plan called for collaboration in three areas: information resources and services, joint storage, and library systems. Six projects were identified:

1. building or acquiring a joint storage facility easily accessible from all three libraries
2. exploring the feasibility of purchasing a single integrated library system
3. facilitating the sharing of data resources
4. networking information resources
5. facilitating the sharing of paper-based information resources and making information available electronically
6. rationalising collection development

A report was produced that recaps “the first five years” (1995-1999). It explains the rationale, the timeline, and the eventual success in realizing the projects identified by the TUG institutions. The section of the report, Looking forward, mentions future collaborative initiatives which have since been realized.