

Restructuring at UCLA Library

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At UCLA we call it “academic and administrative restructuring.” It has other names in other places. But the same scenario, with differing dimensions, remains if called something else—higher education and large research universities are strained at the core and those of us who care about and for them are challenged to polish our crystal balls and gaze toward a future that will sustain the values and beliefs that have created our universities. It seems the debate is raging as ARL looks at scenarios for the future,¹ and Ithaka² and other groups are pushing to forecast the future of research libraries.

Dan Greenstein, Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Programs at the University of California, has been widely quoted from remarks made at a forum at Baruch College of the City University of New York. He was reported to have stated, “The university library of the future will be sparsely staffed, highly decentralized, and have a physical plant consisting of little more than special collections and study areas. We’re already starting to see a move on the part of the university libraries...to outsource virtually all the services developed and maintained over the years.”³ This statement has sparked a widespread debate about just how accurate such a forecast is.

UCLA Library does not approach its future with this view in mind. When I arrived at UCLA in 2003, the library was faced with budget reductions that actually took root in 1994 when the state budget faced significant shortfalls in revenue. I was challenged with recovering from a failed integrated library system solution and the closure of the physics library. We worked those difficulties through. Integration of most of the separate technical services units across a diverse campus was already underway. Librarians were defining how we could become more engaged in new directions for undergraduate education, experiment with digital reference, and envision a new “UCLA electronic library.” Over the next two years, we drafted a new strategic plan that resulted

in a process, not a document, which would help us envision our future at UCLA.⁴ That plan still provides the foundation from which we are developing new futures for the UCLA Library.

As we think about the future, we have affirmed the overall strategic directions laid out in our strategic plan and have added two more: (1) build and operate a responsible organization, and (2) develop a research agenda for the library. A major impetus for this has been the library's response to academic and administrative restructuring since we straddle both sides within the UCLA community. As I mentioned, we began consolidation and merger of "behind the scenes" operations in 2002. Technical services functions of acquisitions, serials, and cataloging as well as interlibrary loan were examined. As those plans were implemented, we were able to reduce the number of staff positions that had traditionally supported these functions. We protected the baseline acquisitions budget, and those positions remaining in the consolidated operations were redefined. Anyone who has gone through this experience knows that that is no easy task as work within a unionized environment requires a good deal of consultation and discussion. From that initial process, the Cataloging and Metadata Center was born, which has developed to provide broad-based support for the description of unique holdings, to partner with academic faculty on digital projects to create metadata, and to tackle various backlogs of monographs and serials so they are discoverable by faculty and students.

In 2006 sciences acquisitions was merged into this consolidated operation, in 2008–09 acquisitions for the Management Library was added, and planning is underway for the same in the Music Library. When the head of the Sciences and Engineering Libraries retired, responsibility for oversight of all of the sciences, including the Biomedical Library was centralized under one Associate University Librarian. We took that same approach when the head of the arts and music libraries retired. There were a number of librarian reassignments to fill gaps in various disciplines across campus. New units were created to support licensing and digital content management as well as to establish a full-scale preservation office for the first time in UCLA Library history.

In 2009 five special collections units were combined into a new UCLA Library Special Collections. While collections were not relocated, this allowed for integration of various "behind the scenes operations" as well as public services in order to better support this growing area of concentration. A new department head was on board by March 2010 and is working to address these integration issues.

With our involvement and leadership, the campus has embedded an intellectual property librarian into its implementation of the Common and Collaborative Learning Environment (MOODLE), which ideally will replace some 26 separate and distinct course management systems formerly used by departments and schools. This work and the work of our Scholarly Communication Steering Committee has enhanced the library's support to faculty and graduate students in managing their own intellectual property and in determining what can be posted on course websites as well as how licensed information is incorporated into course packets produced by the campus bookstore.

These efforts have helped us enhance our support of undergraduate education as it changes at UCLA. As departments mature their undergraduate capstone requirements, the library is called upon to provide access to primary source materials for a significantly enlarged student base. This calls for new directions in instruction and engagement and will increase the demand on our unique resources.

To more adequately support the implementation of the UCLA IT strategic plan and enhance the digital scholarship role that the library plays on the campus, a new Associate University Librarian (AUL) for Digital Initiatives and Information Technology was appointed in April 2010. Four units that previously reported to different AULs and the Deputy University Librarian now combine to form a new direction focused on digital scholarship and other IT initiatives. Three of these units, the Digital Library Program, Web Services, and Library Computing Services, were all created or refocused during the last five years. Now their challenge is to work together in support of the library. The AUL for Digital Initiatives and Information Technology also supports an increased effort to coordinate the library's information technology programs with those of various units across the broader campus. This new structure will guide us as we begin to work with the campus to address the "data challenge."

We have worked tirelessly with our broader UC colleagues in collection development, preservation, digital asset management, and resource sharing. UCLA manages one of the regional facilities for our colleagues. We participate broadly in the planning and design of new services, such as those directions recommended by the Bibliographic Services Task Force.

I am occasionally asked what all of this means for the library and for UCLA. "What are your goals?" I generally respond that for me it is all about keeping

UCLA Library within the top 10 research libraries in North America. That supports the chancellor's goal of sustaining a major public research university. Without a library to support his vision, the disciplines, degrees, colleges, schools, and programs of UCLA will not be able to succeed. So our whole approach at academic and administrative restructuring is focused toward that end.

Restructuring's Implications for Library Staffing

Given this background, what has restructuring meant for staffing and what will library staff look like in the future? We are already seeing some of the realities and have taken steps to address the challenge as we can best define them.

Define and Recruit Key Leadership Positions

By tightening senior leadership positions we have moved to bring talent into the library that can guide us into the future. By redefining mid-management positions into positions of leadership we hope to strengthen our contribution to the campus. Traditionally, these positions also managed facilities and staffing; I want them to concentrate more on program and scholarly support. I want librarians to do "library work" not staff security desks or reshelve books, though these are important and necessary tasks. I want librarians who think like our users, both students and faculty, and who can relate to the social technologies and networking that define these audiences. I want librarians who engage with our users to build collections and define our programs. We support their development with training and other tools, many sponsored by ARL and other entities (UCLA Senior Fellows, ARL Research Library Leadership Fellows, Frye Leadership Institute, ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute, etc.).

Explore Alternative Recruitment Tracks for Academic Appointments

We aggressively recruit and hire newly minted MLIS students, but this pool is shrinking. Their expertise is one of the best returns on investment that the campus can make. As a participant in the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) Postdoctoral Fellowships in Academic Libraries,⁵ we have had new talent coming into the library over the past five years. Some of these fellows move into staff positions; in fact, our new head of Collections, Research, and Instructional Services at the Charles E. Young Research Library is a CLIR post-

doctoral fellow who has cast her lot with us. Another has assumed a challenge as an area studies bibliographer. And another is working in our “Collecting Los Angeles” initiative with indigenous populations in Los Angeles. With each retirement and each resignation, we examine the position and redefine it to meet new and changing needs in supporting UCLA programs.

We are not looking for a “generic” librarian, we seek out librarians who can do reference and instruction and use new social networking technologies in their work. We seek librarians who are strong subject specialists and understand the literature of the disciplines that they will serve. We are challenged to provide librarians who can support teaching and learning but who also understand and support the scope of research done at UCLA. I want librarians who promote the

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library's value-add to research through collaboration, breaking down artificial boundaries of the internal organization chart, and going beyond the physical walls of the library and into virtual space to speed messages and images back and forth. We need experts who can connect with researchers and show them what the library can do for them, and then plan with them what we

can do together. Our experts then bring back some of these researchers and work with them inside our libraries. Some of our experts are embedded in the departments where the students are.

Enhance the Career Path for Seasoned and Talented Staff

As mentioned above, we are rethinking a number of our senior staff positions to assume responsibility for portions that used to be assigned to librarian unit heads—management of facilities, processing of personnel forms, acquiring supplies and outside services, maintaining technology, and handling student employment. UCLA has always had a very talented pool of staff for which this opportunity significantly enhances their development. Again, it is critical that their development be supported with a strong staff development portfolio.

Embrace the Potential Contributions of Students

As we restructure, we are increasingly dependent on the talents of the students who study at UCLA. They serve as desk assistants, oversee night and weekend services, and take on tasks beyond reshelving materials. Perhaps the most

promising example of this has been the creation of the Center for Primary Research and Training⁶ within Library Special Collections. With more than 100 graduate students who have been engaged in processing previously “hidden” collections since the center’s establishment in 2004, we have a solid track record of the contributions these students can make, and they have also had real experience in working with and handling primary source materials. Increasingly the center engages faculty support and involvement and brings language and subject expertise to the library that we could never employ on a long-term basis. We expect that a number of theses and dissertations will result from what students find and learn while working in the center. I have also funded an initiative within Web Services to bring several graduate students aboard to explore potential library applications of social networking technologies. We are beginning to see the potential of tapping this kind of talent on the campus, and their presence contributes to a better understanding of what students expect from us.

Conclusion

We know that we will be different, but I do not define the UCLA Library as “sparsely staffed, highly decentralized, and a physical plant consisting of little more than special collections and study areas.” When we open our renovated space in the Research Library next spring, the research commons will have collaborative space with the Center for Digital Humanities for a cultural heritage laboratory. We will reach out to build new partnerships and collaborations that bring faculty and students into our space to create new knowledge, discover our collections in new ways, and interact with our academic staff librarians as partners in that journey.

My vision for the UCLA Library does not sustain a static organization, but a library that engages and develops. At UC the shared activities that might be managed by the Office of the President in the future should not focus on temporal consolidations of systemwide library space or services. These efforts need to be campus-based and address campus priorities. Our collaboration should strengthen, not diminish, our capacity in meeting the challenges inherent in “restructuring.” This direction is reflected in UCLA Library’s living planning documents and new campus collaborations.

As I finish this paper, the UC system is planning a task force study to “recommend the systemwide strategies and investments that the University

needs to pursue with regard to library services in light of the numerous environment changes....” I am concerned about a charge that speaks to “greater systemwide or regional consolidation of library services and systems” and “use of library space.” Each of our campuses is different; we offer different degrees and focus on differing disciplines; we believe in service to our respective communities. I hope we do not lose that. UCLA is truly unique and interesting as each of us is. We need to be able to flourish in the context of our setting.

Let us be cautious that we are not about to “burn the great library at Alexandria,” only to force future generations to rebuild it in a new era to preserve the record of humankind and the kaleidoscope of human knowledge.

- ¹ See *The ARL 2030 Scenarios: A User's Guide for Research Libraries* (Washington, DC: ARL, 2010), <http://www.arl.org/rtl/plan/scenarios/usersguide/>.
- ² See Roger C. Schonfeld and Ross Housewright, *Faculty Survey 2009: Key Strategic Insights for Libraries, Publishers, and Societies* ([New York]: Ithaka S+R, 2010), <http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/faculty-surveys-2000-2009/Faculty%20Study%202009.pdf>.
- ³ Peter Scott, “Libraries of the Future According to Daniel Greenstein,” *Peter Scott's Library Blog*, September 28, 2009, <http://xrefer.blogspot.com/2009/09/libraries-of-future-according-to-daniel.html>.
- ⁴ “UCLA Library Strategic Plan, 2006–09,” November 15, 2005 (currently under revision and update), <http://www2.library.ucla.edu/pdf/UCLA%20Library%20Strategic%20Plan%20200609.pdf>.
- ⁵ See “CLIR Awards & Fellowships: Postdoctoral Fellowship in Academic Libraries 2011: About the Program,” <http://www.clir.org/fellowships/postdoc/postdoc.html>.
- ⁶ See “UCLA Library Department of Special Collections: Center for Primary Research and Training Research Opportunities,” <http://www.library.ucla.edu/specialcollections/researchlibrary/9613.cfm>.

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