

Report of the Joint Academic and Administrative Working Group on the University Library

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are pleased to deliver this report of the Joint Academic and Administrative Work Group on the University Library. In late April, we were [charged](#) with examining the University Library and devising a set of readily deployable recommendations that capitalize on the [2013 Report of the Commission on the Future of the UC Berkeley Library](#). We have since met as a group six times, divided into three subgroups (on Collections, Staffing, and Space), gathered extensive data (mostly from existing internal or public sources), and consulted with colleagues across campus.

Our examination has led us to conclude that the alarming pattern of disinvestment noted at the time of the 2013 Report has since become dire. The funding situation for the Library has diminished our standing among peer universities far beyond declines noted in the 2013 Report and now severely threatens to undermine our research and teaching mission. In 2013 we were at an inflection point. In 2023 we are at a crisis point.

We recognize the broader context of the Library's budget situation. Decreasing state support, lost revenue during the pandemic, and inflationary pressures have required cost-cutting and difficult choices across campus. But we are at the point that continuing to underfund the University Library—the most important support of research and teaching across campus—will undermine the University's mission in ways that will not be reversible even when the overall budgetary situation improves. Books that are not purchased when they are published may simply be unavailable in the future; specialized expertise lost when staff leave may never be replaced; the sense of intellectual community sacrificed when we cannot maintain spaces for in-person reflection and engagement may never be rekindled; physical spaces vacated by the Library and dedicated to other campus uses may never be regained; and faculty and students whom we lose (or cannot recruit in the first place) because of the lack of a world-class Library will never contribute to Berkeley's academic excellence. In this era of difficult budgetary choices, we are convinced that reinvesting in the Library must be a top priority to prevent undermining Berkeley's academic standing in the long-term.

We recommend targeted reinvestment in the University Library. The discussions below provide details related specifically to the areas of Collections, Staffing, and Space. Recognizing the difficult tradeoffs involved in a time of overall budgetary stress, we have sometimes included both an aspirational recommendation designed to help our Library reestablish its standing among great academic libraries, and a minimal version designed to avoid the most dire consequences for our academic mission. Although the charge asked us “to identify potential new sources of funding and existing programs from which funding could be shifted,” the workgroup quickly determined that we were not the appropriate entity to make such recommendations, since we did not have a panoramic

or fully informed view of expenditures and needs in other areas of the campus budget. We have therefore not included any discussion of new or alternative sources of funding in this report, but we welcome the opportunity to consult with the campus administration on these questions in the near future.

Recommendations

- Campus funding for the Library should be sufficient to:
 1. Re-establish the Library's ability to support core scholarly resource **acquisitions, licensing, and other access** necessary for Berkeley-quality research and teaching and also to avoid reputational loss that endangers recruitment and retention of faculty and students.
 2. Support the continued **digital transformation** of the Library's analog collection.
 3. Allow the Library to **support new programs and degrees**, and growth in ongoing activities.
 4. Halt the attrition in professional and support staff and achieve staffing levels necessary to **reestablish selector librarian expertise** across all areas of research on campus (including newly emerging areas).
 5. Ensure adequate allocation, maintenance, and staffing of library spaces for **individual and collaborative study and research**, particularly in connection with the use of library collections and information services.
 6. Develop an **overall campus plan** for planning, providing, and managing student individual and collaborative study spaces that do not require the costly resources and information professional services provided by the Library, at a level that matches expanding campus needs.
 7. Ensure adequate allocation, maintenance, and staffing of library service points to allow **access to collections** (including special collections, and curated collections held in subject specialty libraries), **access to information professional services**, and **sufficient work space collocated** with collections that do not circulate, at least during normal business hours and some evening and weekend hours.

- Specifically, we recommend the following funding changes:
 8. The campus should provide the Library with additional annual funding of \$32.5 starting in FY23-24, based on the following specific needs:
 - a. \$11.5M annually to match (and update to current dollars) the 2013 Report's call to restore the Library's collections buying power to 2006 levels (\$5 million per the 2013 report, plus \$6.5 million for

intervening inflation¹). The calculations are documented in [this document](#). The bare minimum annual increase required to merely restore 2013 buying power is \$5.6M. To fulfill this recommendation now requires a funding increase in FY23-24 of \$11.5 million plus \$500,000 annually to support the continued digital transformation of the Library's analog collection.

- b. \$20.5M annually to match (and update to current dollars) the 2013 Report's recommended staffing increases. The bare minimum annual increase required to merely restore 2013 staffing expenditures is \$11.5M.² These calculations are documented in [this document](#).
9. Going forward, the campus should annually increase the Library's funding by an amount sufficient to cover the previous year's inflation, based on the Higher Education Price Index.
 10. The campus should adopt the funding structure outlined in the [2017 Report of the Working Group on Public and Common Goods Funding](#), which would adjust Library funding to match changing academic activity levels.
 11. The Chancellor should instruct the office of University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR) to make fundraising for (and collaboratively with) the Library a higher priority, and to report annually on progress as part of the annual review of the Vice Chancellor for University Development and Alumni Relations.
- Both the Academic Senate and administration should establish regular mechanisms for future ongoing review of the University Library and campus support for it.

¹ For our recommendations we use the Higher Education Price Index measure of higher education inflation. As discussed in the Collections section below, HEPI is an underestimate of inflation for serials and monographs (print and electronic). However, it is a well-established index that is easily obtained for future annual increases; inflation measurement for the mix of materials and formats the Library acquires and licenses is not straightforward, and is not available from a single source.

² We are not able at this time to estimate directly how much recommendations 5-7 specifically would cost as an increment to today's funding, for a number of reasons. Importantly, how much money would be needed for spaces and their associated staffing depends critically on whether campus agrees that non-library-specific study spaces should be managed and maintained by some other campus entity, or whether that responsibility should be added explicitly, with funding, to the Library's mission. In addition, costing out the recommendations is quite complex because of the sharing of collections, service and library study space duties across over 100 employees: a staffing plan to fulfill recommendations 5-7 would depend on the specific configuration of services and spaces campus wanted and was willing to fund. Finally, space costs depend critically on whether restored study space were to be provided at scale in one or two large spaces, like Moffitt and Gardner Stacks, or in smaller distributed spaces, like the subject specialty libraries that are being closed.

We note that the recommended funding increases do not provide catch-up funding for the years of declining acquisitions and licensing. Further, unless Library funding is pegged to a measure of changing academic activity levels *and* new degree programs and fields of study are highly correlated with the metrics of increased activity, recommended funding increases will not be sufficient to address expanding demands on the Library's scholarly resources. Thus, though these recommended increases would help Berkeley recover from the crisis that has emerged, they would still leave the campus behind its peers and behind the recommendations of the 2013 Report.

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the Commission on the Future of the University Library responded to the charge of “holistically envisioning the desired future mission of the Library . . . with the imperative of supporting Berkeley’s academic preeminence.” The Commission made a [series of recommendations](#) for how the Library should “align its organizational structure and its institutional culture with the rapidly changing needs of faculty research and student learning” and how the campus community as a whole should take responsibility for “a serious strategy of major reinvestment” in the University Library. Many of these recommendations have since been accomplished: The Library has launched the Office of Scholarly Communications, renovated and opened innovative new 24-hour study and collaboration spaces in Moffitt Library, constructed a new seven-million volume remote storage unit, created a large-scale digitization program, and consolidated service delivery points. But less than half of the recommended funding was provided to support these innovations and to make critical reinvestments in Library collections and staff, and even that limited funding did not persist.

Specifically, the 2013 Commission called for a one time infusion of \$5 million to remedy past shortfalls in collections funding, plus an annual increase in campus funding for the Library of \$13 million (\$6.5M for collections and \$6.5M for staff). The campus responded in 2014 with a \$5.5 million increase in funding, which was specified as an increase in annual funding to begin in 2014-15. But subsequent cuts and unfunded cost inflation eliminated that increase by 2017 and left the Library far behind where it started in real dollars. Although philanthropy has been increasing, it has not made up the difference. At the same time, student enrollment has continued to increase. Indeed, looking back to 2003 (roughly the start of the decreases that prompted the Commission’s recommendations), while student enrollment has increased 40 percent, inflation-adjusted campus funding to the Library has fallen, resulting in a net decrease of nearly 50 percent in inflation-adjusted funding per student. And accounting for inflation and increased enrollment understates the increases in the Library’s costs. Cost increases for both print and electronic resources and associated expenses (shipping, binding, etc.) consistently outpace inflation in other university expenses, even as we negotiate better deals with key publishers. Beyond increases in the cost of ongoing activities, costs are rising because the Library has been asked to provide more services: new degree programs are launched and new research methods and new information sources increase our needs for collections and services and for the expert staff to select, manage, and provide them.

The fact that some of the collections are digital rather than paper, and some of the expert staff assistance is provided remotely instead of face-to-face, does not alleviate the pressure on the Library budget or on the Library’s physical spaces. Electronic resources

are generally as expensive as (and can be more expensive than) physical copies. As for Library spaces, they are more critical than ever as students increasingly live further from campus and rely on the Library as a place to study, do research, and engage in intellectual collaborations with their peers. Moreover, remote work has raised costs (through new technology requirements, training, and inefficiencies caused by reduced on-campus presence).

Until 2022, the Library was able to manage its budgetary situation in a way that insulated students and faculty from some of the impacts of Library funding shortfalls. When, after only two years (that is, by FY2016-17), the budget increase of FY2014-15 had been entirely eliminated, the Library began spending down its reserves (with the encouragement of campus). It prioritized maintaining collections and librarian staff. In addition to spending down reserves, this required severe attrition in support staff and the closure of three subject-specialty libraries (Ed-Psych, Public Health, and Optometry). The Library also benefited from a significant increase in external fundraising, which now provides nearly 30% of its total budget.

However, **it has become glaringly obvious that the current solution is not sustainable.** The Library has now exhausted its discretionary reserves and has likely neared its maximum fundraising potential absent significant endorsement and support from the campus. Mandatory increases in staff compensation (cost of living adjustments, merit increases, and contractual increases for union-represented employees), which had been lower in previous years, were about 4.5% in FY2023, and the Library forecasts another 4.6% for FY2024.

Students and faculty can no longer be insulated from the impacts of this grievous situation. The necessary and predictable result of increased costs and diminished reserves has been that the Library has moved forward with plans to cut staff, pare down collections purchases, and implement a [Long Term Space Plan](#) that includes the closure of three subject specialty libraries, reduces operating hours to unacceptable levels at many other locations, and has triggered alarm across campus and, in the case of the Anthropology Library, protests that have attracted the attention of the national press. In Fall 2022 the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate approved a [Resolution Concerning Funding of the Library](#) that called for campus to restore support for the Library in line with the commitment made in response to the 2013 Report, “[i]n order to protect the quality of the university’s research and teaching mission.” The Chair of the Academic Senate subsequently [communicated to the EVCP](#) regarding “statements in support of increasing funding for the library from the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation, the Committee on the Library, Undergraduate Council, and Graduate Council” and conveyed the “general agreement on DIVCO that increasing funding for the library should be a priority for the campus and that such an increase is

necessary to maintain (or rebuild) a library that is adequate to support Berkeley's research and teaching missions.”

We agree with the Academic Senate that the current funding situation for the Library endangers our research and teaching mission. We fear that, without a quick and decisive correction, the damage will be irreversible. In the three sections that follow, we explain the reasoning behind our recommendations with reference to findings about Library collections, staff, and space.

COLLECTIONS

Overview

Since 2013 the funding for collections has increased by 7%, but during the same period costs have increased by 28%, which translates into a 21% cut in inflation-adjusted funding. Since 2016, when funding peaked following the temporary increase allocated in response to the 2013 Report, inflation-adjusted funding has been cut approximately 35%, or \$4.5 million.³

Scholarship has also changed. In the past, books, journals, and archives were the primary collecting areas. Now the Library also collects or licenses images and streaming media, text files, numerical data, maps, and other emerging formats **in addition** to the traditional books, journals, and archives. The University Library has also repurchased some core content that was available on microfilm because the new digitized formats offer better access and searchability than the analogue version ever could. These new formats present significant challenges to already stretched collection budgets.

The University Library is not alone in facing these challenges. Academic libraries across the country are dealing with many of the above issues, but Berkeley has not kept up with peer institutions. Both our public and private peers have continued to invest at a much higher rate in the growth of their collections. Figures 1a and 1b below show the growth of the collections and indicates that since 2016 Berkeley's total collection has grown by only 623,274 volumes (6.8%), the lowest growth rate compared to our public and private peers (UCLA, UCSD, Harvard, Illinois, Michigan, MIT, Princeton, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Yale) over the same time period.⁴

³ The University Library collections budget in 2022 totaled \$17,531,276. The expenditure represents \$11,983,512 for electronic materials and \$5,547,764 for print resources. The total is composed of \$6,460,120 for monographs, \$10,839,017 for serials and \$232,139 for other resources such as maps, media and data. The collection percentage spending on monographs is 36.85% and serials 61.83%. The ratio of serials to monographic expenditure has not changed much since 2013, when it was 35.70% for monographs and 64.30% for serials.

⁴ Each figure shows growth ending in the year shown on the x-axis (e.g., from 2016 to 2017).

Figure 1a: Library Collection Trends Comparison Between Berkeley and Peer Comparison Institutions From 2016- 2021, Source: UC Berkeley Library ARL Statistics Trends

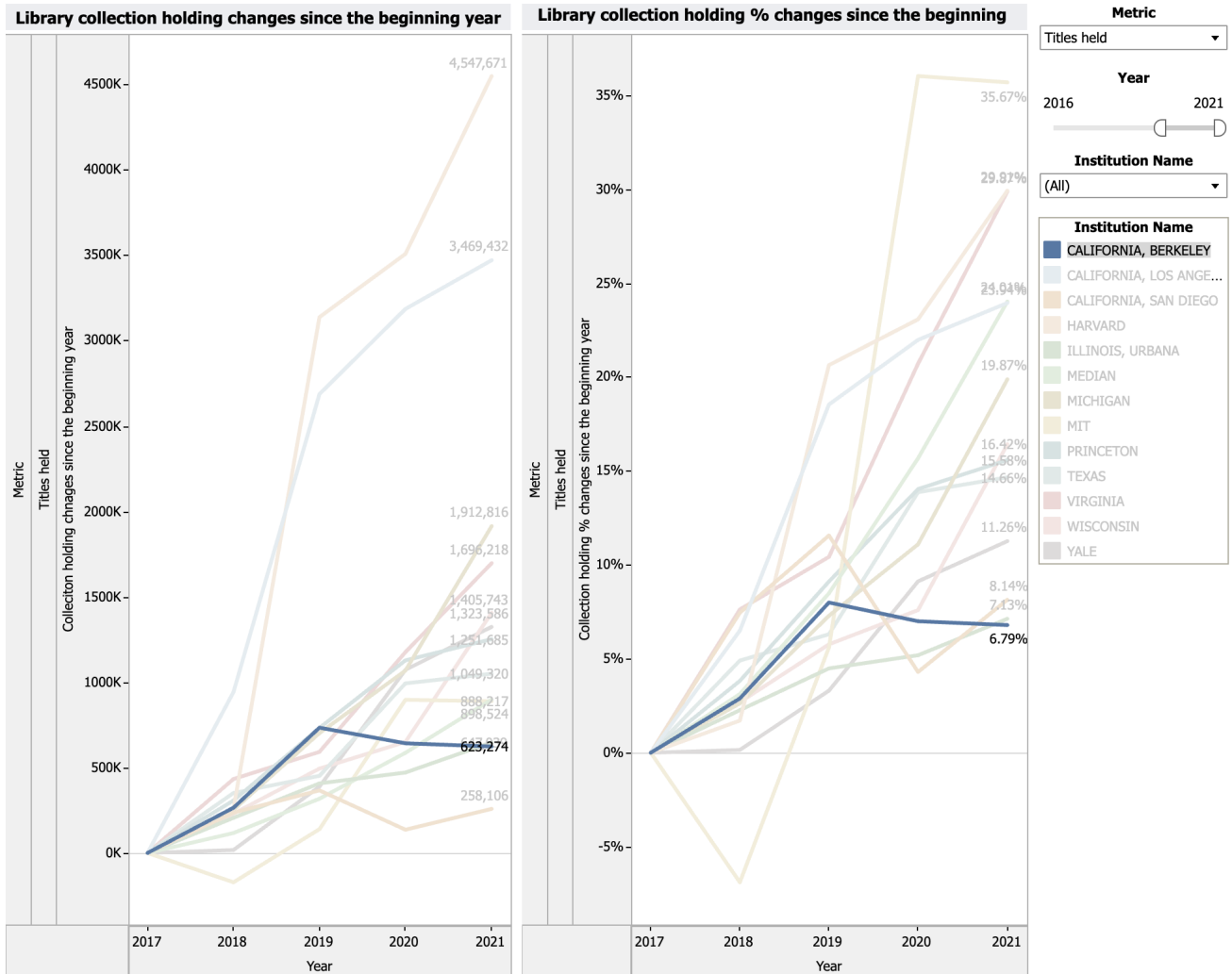
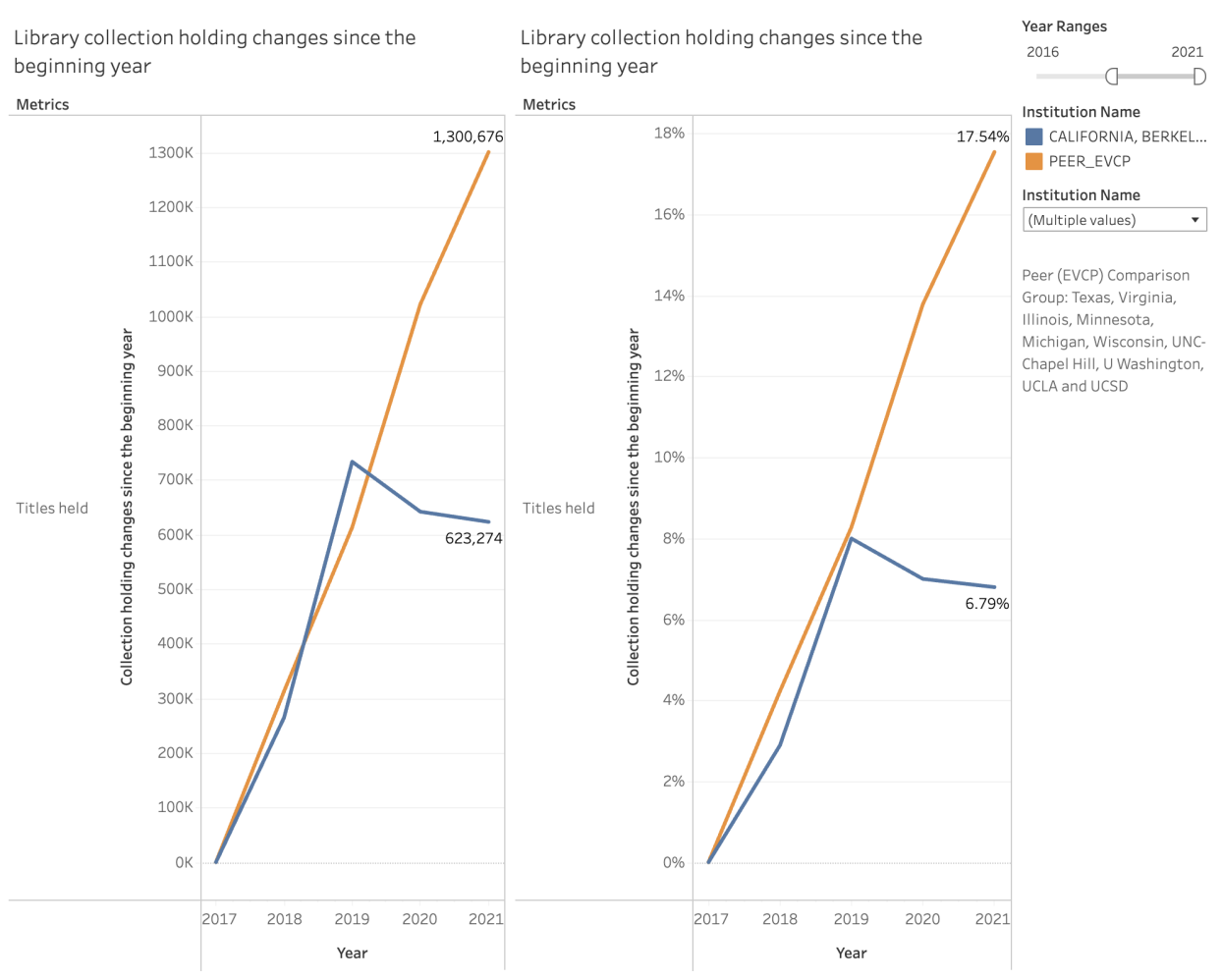
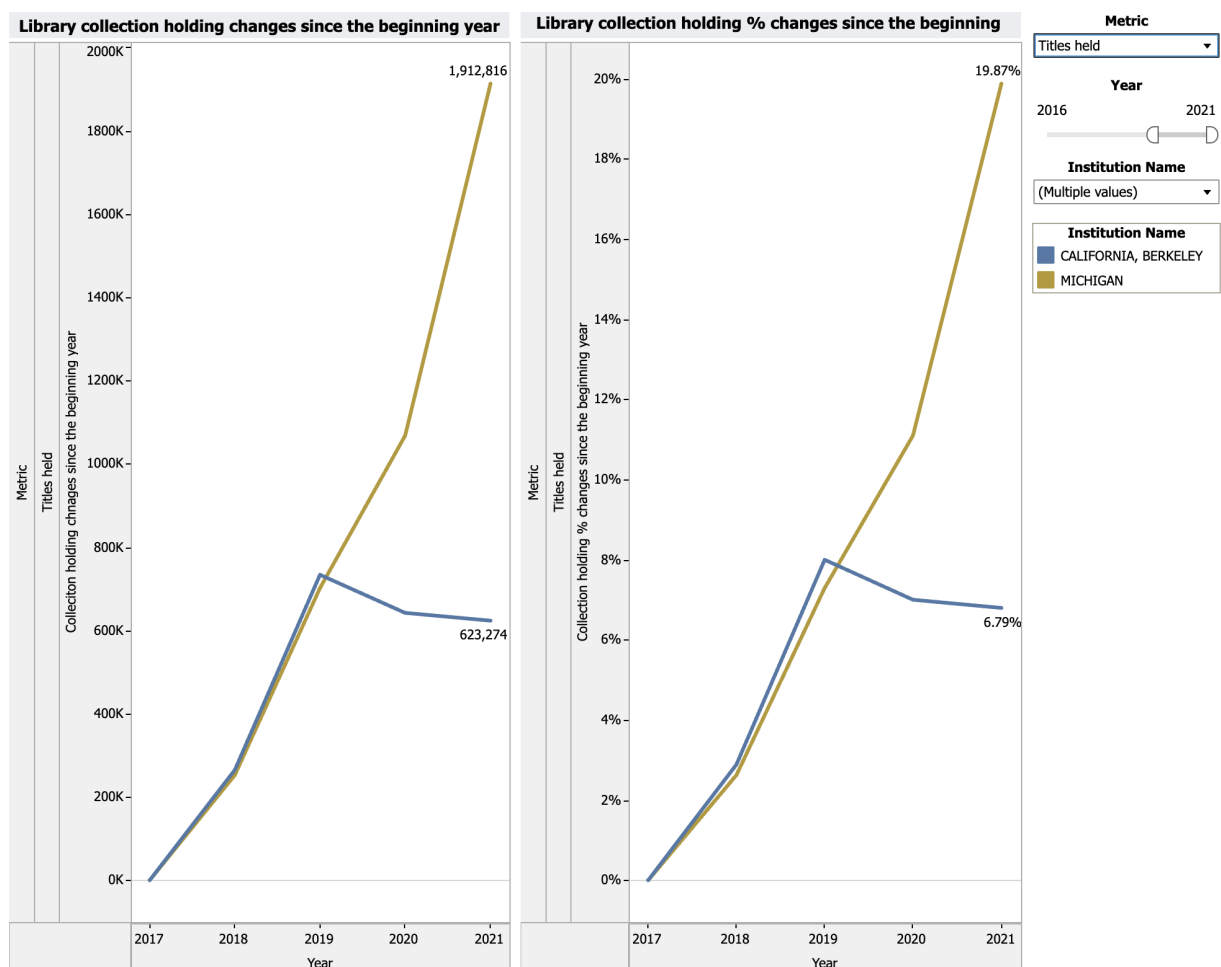


Figure 1b: Library Collection Trends Comparison Between Berkeley and Peer Comparison Group Average From 2016- 2021, Source: UC Berkeley Library ARL Statistics Trends



To illustrate the point more clearly, data from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) demonstrate that our most comparable public peer, the University of Michigan, has been increasing the size of its collections at a much greater rate than Berkeley since 2016 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Growth of collections at Berkeley compared to Michigan, 2016-2021, Source: UC Berkeley Library ARL Statistics Trends



In addition to adversely affecting campus scholars, this decrease in collections growth places the Library at a disadvantage in terms of collaborative interlibrary sharing, **and makes us a less desirable partner** in potential shared collection strategies. Up until now Berkeley has offset some of its collection expenditures by using credits earned from InterLibrary Lending (ILL), since we have been a net lender. Now, however, we are very close to becoming a net borrower, which will result in further reductions in funds available for collections. A future landscape involving partnering with public and private peer institutions in order to share collections and provide access to those shared collections requires continued and increased funding for the Library.

Once a library begins to lag behind in collections, it rapidly becomes almost impossible to make up lost ground: as research and publication move ahead, books and serials not purchased upon publication are unlikely ever to be added to a collection (and sometimes

become altogether impossible to purchase). But probably the gravest consequence of this disinvestment in collections is the effect it will have (and, in some documented cases, has already had) on the recruitment of faculty and graduate students, and on the research they can undertake at Berkeley. This will eventually lead to a loss of stature and reputation, as feedback from our recent program of serials reduction (quoted below) shows.

Berkeley is a destination for visiting scholars from around the world. They come here to collaborate with distinguished colleagues but also to take advantage of resources, libraries and laboratories, not available in their own institutions. Over time, as those resources decline, visitors will choose to go elsewhere; and the campus will lose the intellectual ferment that they bring, the sparks that are struck in high-level collaboration.

Cost inflation

Collection costs are increasing faster than inflation. Generally speaking, marketplace cost increases for serials exceed the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) annually. Monograph price increases, especially for academic books, ebooks, and textbooks, also generally exceed HEPI. Acquisition costs have increased as much as 3% to 5% a year for serials and monographs collectively. Serials have risen especially fast; according to the Bowker Trade Almanac (2022) the increase from 2017 to 2022 was 28%, an average of over 5% per year (see Table 1). More than half of the Library's expenditures for subscriptions and digital access are for publications in the areas of life and health sciences, engineering and physical sciences, and the statistically-oriented social sciences.

Table 1: Serial Acquisition Costs, Source: Bowker Trade Almanac 2022

Index	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Consumer price index	1.9	2.3	1.4	7.0	7.7
US periodicals	5.7	6.7	6.7	2.3	5.6
Hardcover Books	-8.4	-2.5	-2.5	-3.3	1.5
Academic Books (print)	0.0	-0.9	8.3	-0.9	na
Academic ebooks	5.3	0.3	4.9	-1.8	na
Academic textbooks	-3.2	2.0	2.8	6.8	na
US college books	-0.7	1.3	13.5	6.1	na
US mass paperback	1.2	1.9	3.5	3.3	na
US paperbacks	23	-8.5	-6.7	-0.1	na
US audiobooks	13.8	1.6	-1.1	-26.8	na
US ebooks	16.7	12.7	7.0	13.2	na
serials	6.1	6.1	5.9	3.6	3.8
Online serials	6.0	6.5	6.2	3.8	3.3
British academic books	7.0	-1.8	-1.4	8.2	na

Generally, from 2003-2023, inflationary increases for monographs and serials have not been funded. In order to manage these unfunded increases, the Library routinely decreases funding for monograph purchasing or cancels serials.

Increases in shipping and postage costs have also cut into the budget for collections. From 2016 to 2019, the Library’s average annual shipping costs were \$140,785. In FY2023 the total costs were \$197,638, an increase of \$56,845 or 40% over pre-pandemic rates. As a result, the Library purchases less because of increased expenditure on shipping costs.

Shipping and postage costs are especially burdensome in some key areas of collection. As the Languages, Language-based Disciplines, and Global Citizenship Task Force observed in its June 6, 2023, report: “While non-English materials from countries beyond the US and UK are often less expensive than typical academic press books, both shipping and cataloging are significantly more costly. Cataloging non-English materials requires both standard cataloging experience and reading knowledge of the language in question. The Library cannot employ enough staff who read all languages used on campus for research and teaching. Materials that cannot be cataloged by an employee are outsourced to an independent vendor for cataloging.”

At the same time, bindery costs have more than doubled. The UC Bindery preserves journal issues by binding them into volumes. Binding is also utilized to protect monographs and rebind damaged materials.

Table 2: Binding price increases from 2016-2023, Source: UC Berkeley Library

	2016 Average price	2023 Average price	% increase
Mylar	\$10.50	\$31.50	200%
Rebind (new cover for monograph)	\$18	\$42	133%
Serial	\$17.50	\$39	161%

Costs of digital resources

One of the most significant changes in the Library’s usage and collections since the [2013 Report](#) is the increase in acquiring (and accessing) materials in digital rather than print form. The shift towards digital materials allows the Library to keep pace with

publication trends and to offer users easier access around the clock. But this development brings with it increased costs.

The *Library and Book Trade Annual* (2022) indicates that prices of monographs (academic books) increased 6.5% since 2017, while ebook prices went up 8.7% during the same time period:

Table 3: Monographs Price Increase vs. Library Expenditures Across 2018-2022, Sources: Library and Book Trade Annual (2022) and UC Berkeley Library

	Price increase, 2018-2022 (total)	Library expenditure, 2018-2022	Average annual impact of inflation
Print monographs	6.5%	\$20,825,733	\$270,735
Ebooks	8.7%	\$11,456,068	\$199,356

Interlibrary loan is not a cost-saving alternative to purchasing many electronic materials, because license restrictions often forbid loaning. In addition, in many cases peer libraries are reluctant to loan newly published material.

Our increasing investment in digital materials has also created new demands in the area of staffing. Managing digital resources requires an appropriate level of staffing with unique skills for ordering, licensing, activating, troubleshooting, and discovery. Berkeley was behind our peers in organizing a unit to do this work. Prior to 2016 the Library assigned these responsibilities piecemeal to staff in existing positions. In 2016 a more strategic approach was initiated, when 4.5 FTE were transformed from other positions in order to support the work. Maintaining a hybrid collection requires staff to handle multiple workflows and processes for different format types.

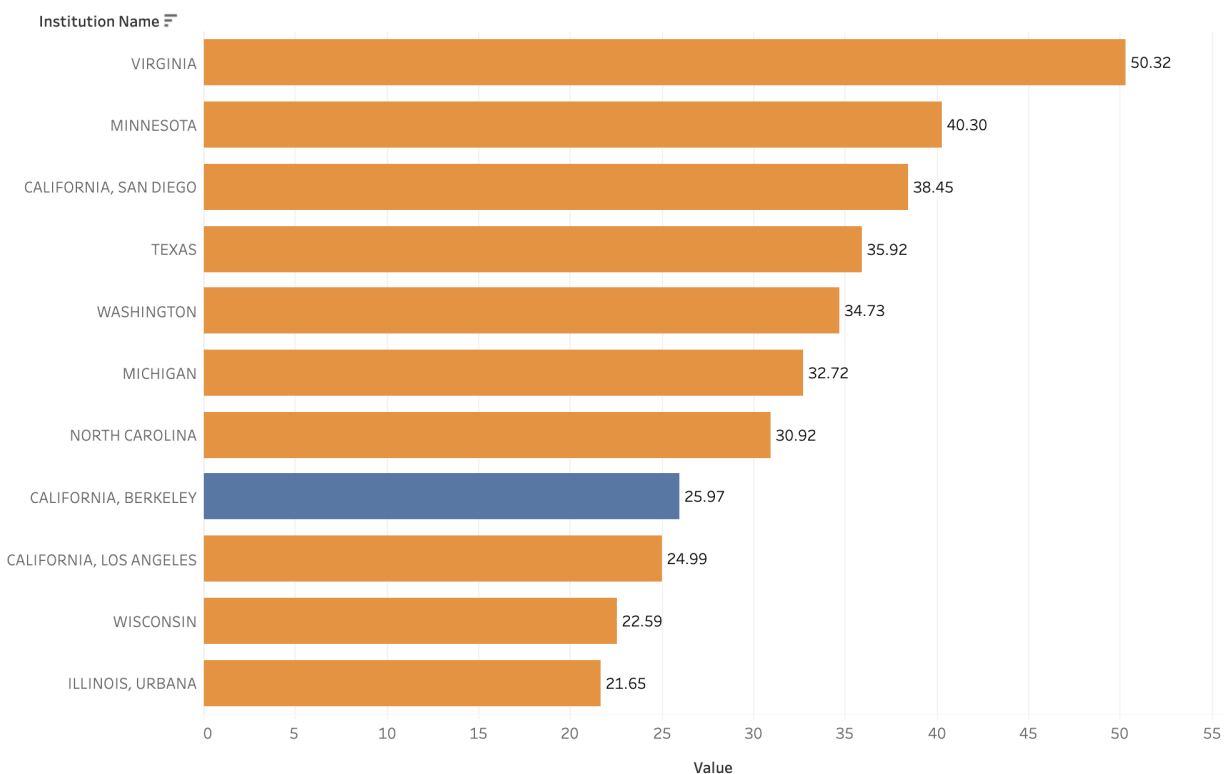
Loss in collections-relevant expertise

Staff loss, addressed more fully in a subsequent section, directly affects the Library’s ability to connect faculty and students with our collections. The University Library staff positions FTE does not match our peers relative to our collection size (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Loss in collections-relevant expertise, Source: UC Berkeley Library

Ratio between staff FTE (prof+support) and title count

*scaled ratio: multiplied 1,000,000 for comparison



The expertise of support staff for managing, processing, and providing access to collections is critical. While the Library as a whole has been able to maintain the number of academic librarians overall (librarian FTE were 68 in 2013 vs. 67 in 2023), in the area of collections there has been a steady loss of expertise among the selectors, the people who decide what materials to buy or to license. This largely occurred because the Library created a number of librarian positions to manage the new initiatives called for in the 2013 Report. For example, we have new librarian positions in scholarly communications, systems and discovery (to manage our part of the new, UC-wide integrated catalog and operations system), and data services. Thus, with the total held constant, there are fewer librarians supporting collections.

In addition, the amount of scholarly information in the world has increased exponentially since the shift from analog to digital. Moreover, as new fields of inquiry open up and as more degree programs are added, collections staff must develop expertise in those fields or new collections staff must be hired. Some notable new or greatly expanded campus areas of inquiry include data science, neuroscience, and various area studies. For the most part, the Library has not been able to hire additional expert staff to address these new needs, which has meant that existing staff are stretched thinner and are required to select materials from an increasingly broad range of disciplines and/or in areas outside their expertise. This inevitably means that important materials simply fall through the cracks. They are not acquired, and students and faculty

working in those fields may not even be aware of their existence. Consequently their research is impoverished, with potentially unfortunate effects on their reputations and that of the research caliber of the campus.

We note that others studying campus challenges are also alarmed about the shortage of librarians with specialized subject matter expertise. For example, the Languages, Language-based Disciplines, and Global Citizenship Task Force observed in its June 6, 2023, report that reductions in Library budget “have had a huge negative impact on the Library’s ability to build and maintain collections in general, but represent a particular strain for both acquiring and processing non-English materials which require more specialized expertise, something that comes at an added cost.” The report goes on to observe: “The Library’s collection services division currently does not have the capacity to acquire and catalog the range of foreign language materials needed on campus. In addition, the number of dedicated area studies subject librarians and support staff who are able to assist researchers in navigating these specialized resources has steadily shrunk in the past several years.”

There is another, less visible but equally important way in which staff expertise supporting collections has declined. The Library has prioritized keeping the total number of *librarians* about constant, given faculty and student expectation of subject-matter expertise (though, as discussed above, because we’ve had to cover new disciplines and information technologies, librarian subject-matter expertise in collections *has* decreased). However, collections support requires a large number of additional staff to handle the purchasing and licensing, process incoming materials and move them around campus (and to and from Richmond), catalog them, prepare them for shelving, maintain the stacks, do binding, etc. Non-librarian staff have taken all of the reduction in FTE (more fully documented in the next section), which has deeply undercut its ability to support collections. Figures 4a-b demonstrate how low Berkeley non-professional library staffing has fallen compared to its peers.⁵

⁵ To compare with peers we need to rely on ARL data. These data are collected and reported for “professional” and “other” staff. “Professional” includes more than librarians, but the general point is the same.

Figure 4a: UC Berkeley Library Staff FTE Trends Comparison Between Berkeley and Peer Institutions from 2013–2021, Source: UC Berkeley Library ARL Statistics Trends

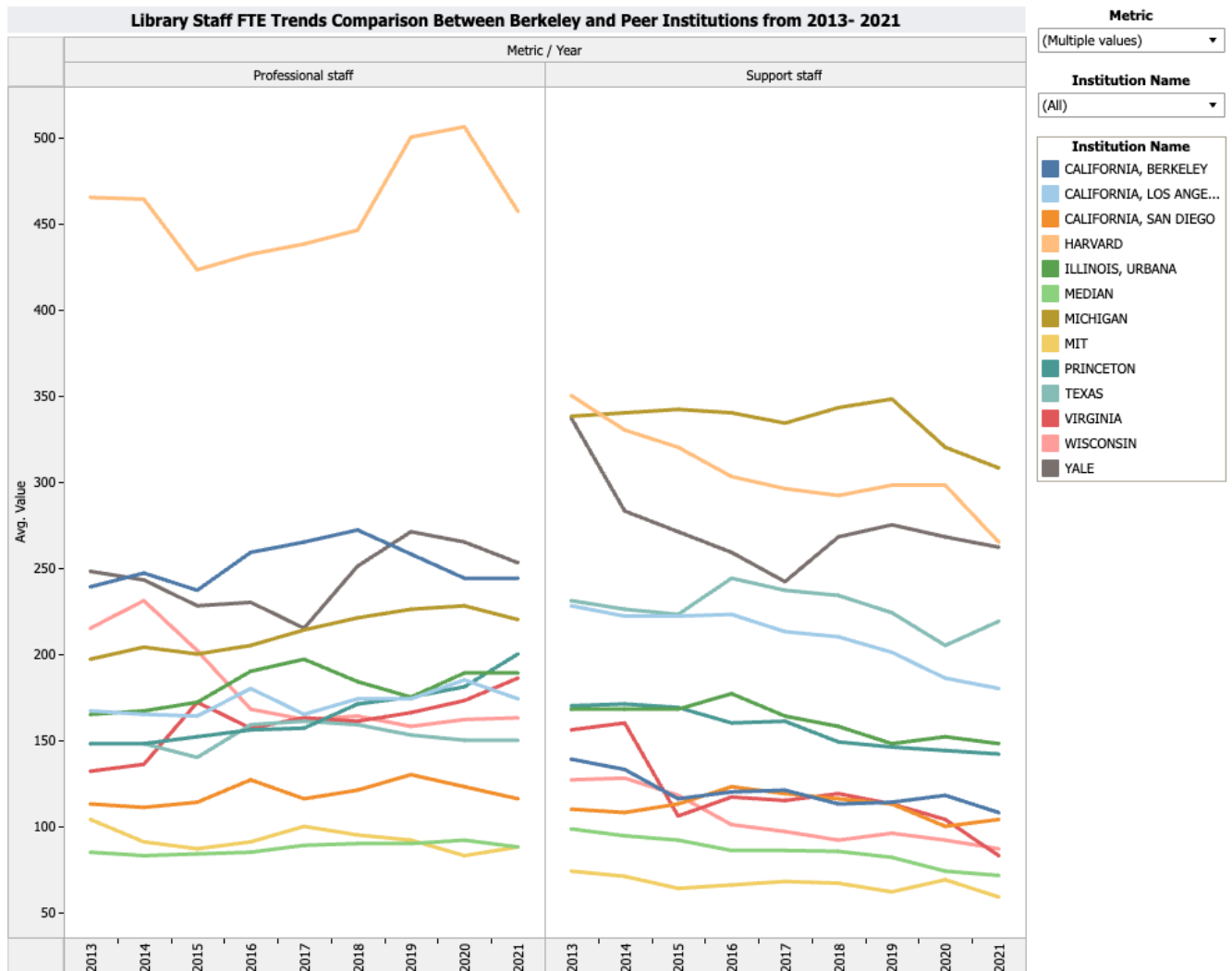
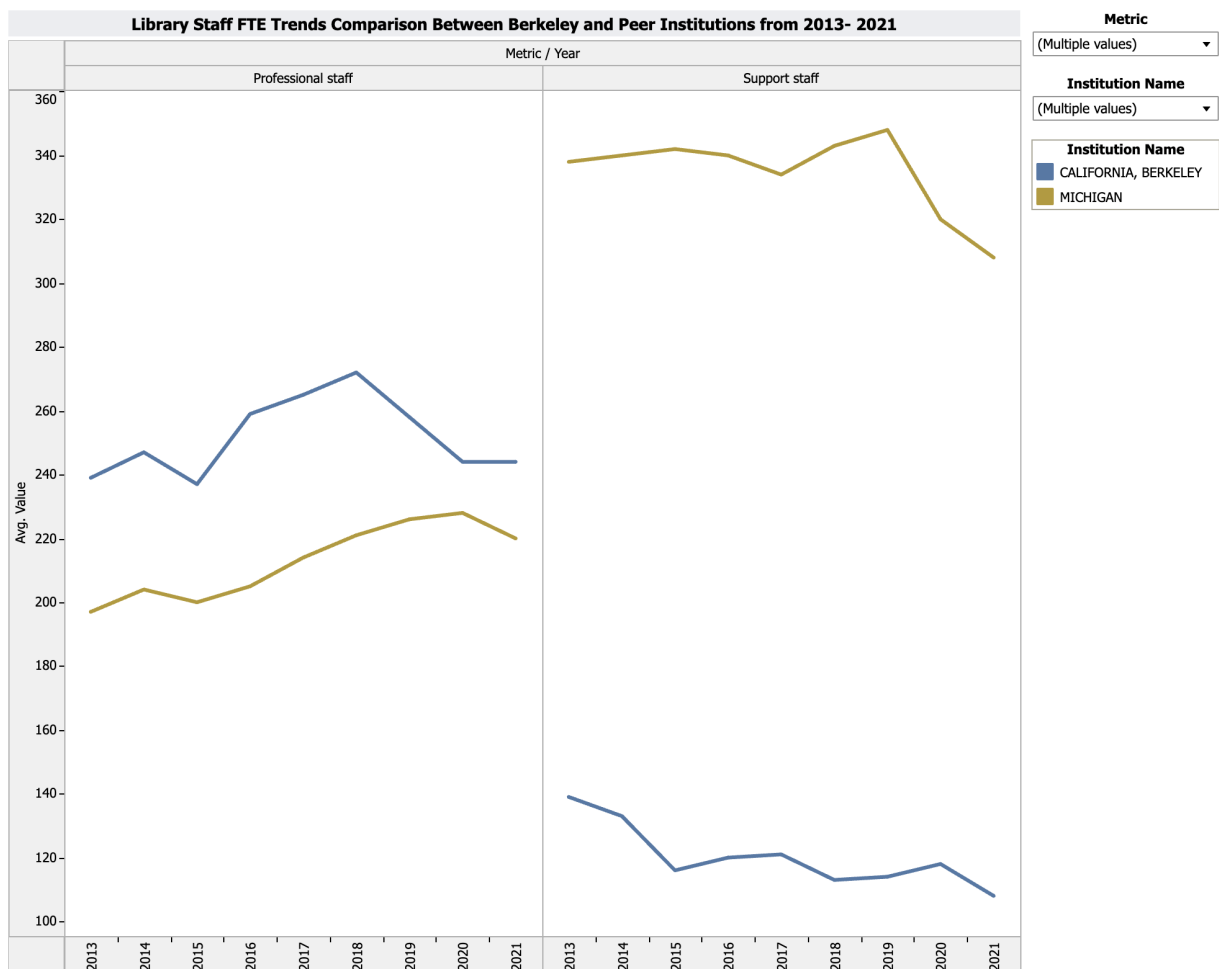


Figure 4b: UC Berkeley Library Staff FTE Trends Comparison Between Berkeley and Michigan from 2013–2021, Source: UC Berkeley Library ARL Statistics Trends



Timely access to needed information

Time is the single most important resource that students and faculty have. The longer it takes them to carry out a particular study, the fewer of those studies they will be able to do. Even if we can rely on interlibrary loan, the delay in the ability to consult a particular source means a delay in the research process. Using out-of-date sources that we do hold may mean continuing down a blind alley, already proved to be so by more current resources. This is not speculation. Members of this working group cope with such delays on a weekly if not daily basis, as do the faculty peers quoted below.

Faculty and Student Response

During the 2022-23 academic year both the Library and the Academic Senate solicited feedback from faculty and students on various aspects of library services and budget. In November the Committee on the Library contacted department chairs, inviting them to comment on the state of library collections and to gather responses from members of

their departments. The Committee received 22 responses to this call, from department chairs in the humanities, social sciences, hard sciences, and professional schools, and from a few individual faculty and graduate students. Another source of information about campus perceptions of the library were the conversations workgroup members conducted with subject area librarians, who described both the challenges they themselves had encountered with maintaining the quality and currency of their collections and the requests for materials not held at Berkeley they had received from faculty and students. Finally, the library solicited community feedback on its plan to cut back serials subscriptions, and the large volume and impassioned tone of the responses clearly shows that students and faculty are acutely aware of the negative impact of reduced acquisitions and licensing funding.

Responses via all of these channels cohered around a few central points:

- Maintaining top-tier library collections is essential to maintaining the quality of research conducted at Berkeley.
- There is a direct connection between the quality of the collections and the recruitment and retention of the best faculty (and graduate students);
- The success of both undergraduate and graduate students requires ready access to a broad range of books, journals, and databases.
- The quality of the library's collections is widely understood as correlated with—and as an essential condition for—Berkeley's status as a world-class institution.

One department chair wrote “If funding is not improved, Berkeley will ultimately become less attractive to faculty recruits, graduate students, and potentially even donors to the Library, since the Library's mantle of excellence will have faded.” Another recalled how the excellence of the library was a key factor in his own decision to join the Berkeley faculty years ago, and went on to describe in detail the gaps in the collections, access delays, and other obstacles that younger faculty in his department have encountered in recent years and the detrimental effects this has had on their research productivity.

Multiple faculty members described situations in which they had to appeal to, or collaborate with a colleague at another institution simply in order to get access to journals and databases to which Berkeley no longer subscribes. As one faculty member explained

“As a proud graduate of this campus, and a current tenured professor, I find it truly pathetic that I have to write friends at Stanford to have them send me PDFs of journal articles that I need to do my research and teaching. (And you can only write so many times before people stop responding.) The university's research

mission will continue to crumble under these conditions if campus administration does not fix the situation immediately.”

Another commenter assessed the problem in terms of the impending threat to Berkeley’s reputation for innovation: “If the [campus] wants to continue to put out cutting edge research, [it] needs to continue supporting access to current research for those who are producing these innovations on campus.”

Collections Summary

Our findings and peer comparisons demonstrate the urgent need to re-establish the Library’s ability to support core scholarly resource **acquisitions, licensing, and other access** necessary for Berkeley-quality research and teaching and also to avoid reputational loss that endangers recruitment and retention of faculty and students; to support the continued **digital transformation** of the Library’s analog collection; to allow the Library to **support new programs and degrees**, and growth in ongoing activities; and to halt the attrition in professional and support staff and achieve staffing levels necessary to **reestablish selector librarian expertise** across all areas of research on campus (including newly emerging areas). These specific funding requirements to satisfy these needs are presented, in combination with funding for the needs articulated below, in the [Executive Summary](#).

STAFFING

Introduction

Close to two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of the Library's total expenditures are for people: librarians, other staff, and temporary employees (mainly student assistants). Thus, we begin by summarizing some of what they do and examining ways in which this is changing.

The universe of information in print, digital, and other media far exceeds what any library can hold. A primary task of the librarians, in consultation with faculty, is to select what is most valuable for current and future research. Library staff are also responsible for ordering, processing, and licensing new scholarly resources in all formats; cataloging and making resources discoverable via OCLC (formerly, the Online Computer Library Center, an interlibrary resource sharing cooperative), UC Library Search, and local finding aids; conservation and preservation; shelving and checkout; interlibrary loan services; and managing the Northern Regional Library Facility (NRLF) and delivery of materials between NRLF and the campus.

Librarians provide research support through consultation and reference services and assist instruction by teaching students the fundamentals of information literacy and the use of library resources, critical skills for the next generation of scholars and informed citizens. These Library services enable students and scholars both to find resources they are looking for, and to discover others that they may not have known about.

The Main (Gardner) Stacks and the array of subject specialty libraries across the campus require a combination of professional and temporary staff to keep open and safeguard the collections held there.

Other essential staff functions include IT support, with Library staff responsible for the online catalog and search platforms, record-keeping, off-campus access and authentication, web services, and other tasks, most of which, apart from basic network infrastructure, is done in house and a little by the California Digital Library (CDL). Library staff also negotiate and manage contracts and agreements including gifts, licensing, contracting for acquisitions, metadata services and digitization, and services provided by the Library under contract with Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL).

In addition to these traditional functions, we identified three major areas in which the Library has enhanced its services since the time of the [2013 Report](#).

Digitization and e-Reserves. The Library’s electronic course reserves service is widely used and highly valued by faculty and students. For example, in Fall 2021 (after in-person instruction resumed), e-Reserves served 441 courses in 69 departments with 1406 books, 231 articles, and 547 media. This service is expensive, requiring substantial staff time to manage, acquire e-books, and digitize physical materials held by the Library for access through its UC BEARS controlled digital lending platform.

Scholarly communications. The [2013 Report](#) recommended that the Library create an Office of Scholarly Communications to assist faculty, students, and others with open access and other publishing options, copyright, open course content, and related matters. This recommendation has been successfully implemented, requiring 4 permanent staff FTE for the new services.

Moffitt Library. The [2013 Report](#) recommended transforming the Moffitt Undergraduate Library into a “24/7 student learning and resource center” which would not be a circulating library, but would be “optimally resourced with state-of-the art technology and the human expertise required by students in the twenty-first century.” The Library has undertaken this project. The renovation of the upper two floors was completed in 2016. The Library has secured approximately \$60M (about \$55M from donors) for the renovation of the lower three floors, and is in the final stages of construction preparation (blueprints, contractor bidding), with construction scheduled to start in May 2024 and be completed before September 2025. But fulfilling the Moffitt design vision fully will require more staff support than the Library can afford without reinvestment from the campus.

What has changed in the digital era?

The traditional services of curating the collection and providing research and instructional support are as essential as ever, or more so, as new formats such as online databases enlarge the universe of resources and demand new types of expertise. Other library staff functions outlined above are also necessary and in many cases expanded in a world of mixed physical and digital resources.

The [2013 Report](#) reflected this, calling for the Library to continue traditional core services (and expand them as enrollment and degree programs increase), but also to add several new services responsive to the information needs of faculty and students in the digital age.

Some tasks involving the handling of physical materials have decreased over time, as nearly all of the Library’s current journal subscriptions, and some (but still under half) of its current book purchases are in electronic form. However, the need for both old and

new physical materials in many of the major subject specialty libraries, e.g., Bancroft, East Asian, Art History & Classics, and Music, as well as for print books in the general collection, is not likely to be supplanted any time soon by electronic alternatives.

Meanwhile, adapting the Library to a more digital future involves new tasks and expertise. Above we have highlighted e-reserves, scholarly communications, and the Moffitt renovation as initiatives specifically directed towards the digital age; we note that all three involve new commitments of staff time.

Consequences of staff losses over time

Table 3 (p. 12) of the [2013 Report](#) detailed how, over the preceding decade 2003-13, the Library had lost 25% of career librarians and 35% of career support staff, offset slightly by an increase in temporary staff excluding student assistants. As part of its goals for reinvestment in the Library, the Report recommended adding 21 career librarians and additional support staff as needed, anticipating that the total would amount to approximately a 17% increase in staff FTE.

For comparison, the table below (supporting data [here](#)) displays the change in Library staff FTE from 2010 to 2021. Rather than increasing, total career staff FTE declined by an additional 37% from 2013 to 2021. Over the same period, student enrollment at Berkeley rose from 36,000 to 45,000, while total academic FTE for the university as a whole remained close to constant.

Table 4: UC Berkeley Library Staff FTE, Source: UC Berkeley Library

Metric	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Net since 2010
Librarians	86	80	72	68	65	68	71	67	69	65	67	70	-15
Other staff	293	271	255	250	245	246	246	192	190	194	192	189	-105
Student assistants*	129	120	131	126	120	124	110	119	121	132	127	25	-104
Total non-student staff	379	351	327	318	310	314	317	259	259	259	259	259	-120

*For non-student staff, the data are for the University Library only. For students, the data include affiliated libraries (e.g., Law); University Library-only data are not recoverable. Most student employees work for the University Library and thus the trend should be approximately correct.

We note that the figures in this table are not directly comparable to those in the 2013 report, which categorized staff differently; we have included the years 2010-13 here to permit comparison in the trend. We also note that the atypically low number of student assistants for 2021 reflects the period when libraries were closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As can be seen from the table, since 2013 the number of Librarians has remained almost constant, although as already noted, the range of areas requiring their expertise has increased. Meanwhile, there has been an unabated decline in the number of other professional and support staff FTE. The inability to keep pace with staffing needs will become more acute with compensation cost increases. Mandatory increases in staff compensation (cost of living adjustments, merit increases, and contractual increases for union-represented employees) averaged about 4.5% in FY2023 and the Library forecasts another 4.6% for FY2024. Unlike other academic units in which faculty compensation is paid out of the central campus budget, so that mandatory raises are automatically covered, the Library budget itself bears the entire burden of these compensation increases. Mandatory compensation increases without corresponding new funding thus amounts to the imposition of repeated cuts to the Library's purchasing power and ability to provide direct user services.

Comparing Berkeley with peer institutions in total library staff FTE as shown by Association of Research Libraries (ARL) statistics, in 2004-05 Berkeley ranked fifth, after Harvard, Yale, Toronto, and Penn, and ahead of our public peers UCLA (#6) and Michigan (#8). In 2010-11 (the last year available to the 2013 Commission), Berkeley was ninth, below UCLA (#8) and Michigan (#2). In the most recent 2021 statistics, Berkeley is twelfth, below UCLA (#10) and Michigan (#3). ***Put bluntly, our campus ranking in staffing has slipped more than two-fold in these critical years of library digitization and pivot to online services.***

There is a significant difference in the staff profile between Berkeley and its public peers: Berkeley has more professional staff (7th) than Michigan (9th) and UCLA (19th), but fewer support staff (28th) than Michigan (1st) and UCLA (8th) (see Figures 4a and 4b, above). This may reflect a difference in the structure of the Berkeley Library, with its major subject specialty libraries, and/or a greater diversity in Berkeley's collections. But our greater need for professional staff does not alleviate our need for the other staff who ensure the Library's day-to-day functioning.

The [2013 Report](#) identified the worst user impacts of library staff cutbacks as:

1. Reducing staff in the professional librarian series (which compromises both research services and instructional support, as well as high quality collection

development); and

2. Reducing the Libraries' hours of operations.

Both of these impacts, and others, have once again become acute, as attested by the consistent sense of alarm seen in user responses to the [2023 Library Long Term Space Plan](#) and to the call from the Academic Senate Committee on the Library for comment on current Library plans, not to mention ongoing student protests and the Fall 2022 Academic Senate resolution demanding reinvestment in the Library. The impact on hours of operation (and, indeed, closure of subject specialty libraries) is discussed more fully in the subsequent section.

Staff attrition has also had other, less broadly visible, but clearly identifiable adverse impacts. Responsibility for more disciplines and fields has been collapsed onto fewer subject librarians; several respondents to the Committee on the Library's call for comment raised concerns about specific losses of expertise affecting their research. The [September 2022 Title VI Site Visit review of Berkeley's National Resource Center and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship grants](#) identified the library's area studies holdings as one of Berkeley's major strengths, while also raising concerns about declining staff expertise and recommending that Berkeley add full-time area studies librarians in world areas represented by its grants.

Responses from Library users and librarians

While the value of Library professional services and expertise, and the harm done by losses in these areas, are less tangible than cutbacks in acquisitions, hours, or library locations, they are also real.

The value of Library instructional services in particular is reflected in quantitative results from two surveys. The biennial [UC Undergraduate Experience Surveys](#) (UCUES) for Berkeley show that most students regard their proficiency in library and online information research skills as significantly improved since they started their studies, and that a large majority rate in-person research support as either "very important" or "essential" features in a library. The Berkeley [faculty survey](#) conducted by the Library in 2018 in partnership with the Ithaka S+R US Faculty Survey found that substantial majorities of faculty, especially in Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and Life Sciences, agreed that improving students' research skills is an important goal of their courses, and that librarians "contribute significantly" to students' learning by helping them find and access information and develop research skills.

We reviewed comments from faculty, students, and staff in response to the Library's proposal for the [Long Term Space Plan](#), the poll of department chairs by the Academic Senate Committee on the Library requesting feedback on the Aug. 2022 announcement of Library plans for 2022-23, and replies by Library staff to a query from this Work Group on their views of the effects of staff attrition on collections expertise. Pertinent comments cited in the [Long Term Space Plan](#) include:

- Several people shared personal experiences of having partnered with a librarian that benefited their courses, thesis or dissertation, grant, or other project.
- “[W]e know that a key to making the Library’s collections come alive is the professional expertise and academic support provided by professional librarians and library staff. We need the spaces *as well as* the staff to truly deliver on the university’s goals to empower teaching and research.”
- “Our librarians and the resources they create, provide, and maintain are invaluable, and rather than cut them, we need to be enhancing them.”

Faculty and graduate students responding to the Senate Committee poll affirmed the value of Library research support services and expressed concern over specific losses already incurred by staff attrition and alarm at the prospect of future losses. Some relevant comments:

“I am writing in response to your question re library cuts, just after learning that our beloved and much-relied upon gender studies librarian, Margaret Phillips, is about to retire, and apparently there are no plans to replace her. This is a terrible situation, both for faculty research and for teaching. Margaret has come to our classes on a regular basis over the years, and she has also supported both undergraduate and PhD students as they develop their research. That aside, I should say that personally, my research has much benefited from Margaret's expertise, both in the subject area and in use of the library's digital resources. The ongoing cuts in library services are a disaster for the department, and for the campus as a whole.”

“With the very active librarian in the Middle Eastern languages and cultures, we were able to expand the students' use of the library and increase their interest. We hold library sessions in the Arabic program in which students explore the resources and make the best use of them. Cutting the funding for the library will have a grave effect on these resources that are the core of our students' research.”

Our query to the librarians regarding staff attrition focused specifically on its effects on collections expertise. Two replies make clear both the overall trend and specific ways that it comes into play:

“In terms of subject librarians, I think as we expand the portfolios we can't (and don't) have the level of expertise in any given subject that we might have had with a more focused position. For example, at one point we had an Education Librarian and a Psychology Librarian. Now we have a librarian for education, psychology and gender and women's studies. When she retires this summer, education will go to the incoming librarian who also covers political science and public policy and psychology to the librarian who covers sociology, demography and research methods.

Bigger picture, I think we are reducing the time spent on traditional collection development tasks (retrospective collection building, checking bibliographies, reviewing catalogs) and relying on approval plans and shared collection development. I think the focus on instruction, research support and outreach is completely appropriate, but yes, something is lost in this shift.” —Susan Edwards, Head of Library Social Sciences Division

“For decades, UC Berkeley Library has built one of the most respectable research collections in the world, thanks to the support from the Berkeley academic community, but most importantly thanks to the dedicated work of a highly respected team of collection management librarians who possessed academic training, language skills, professional prowess, in-depth knowledge of global publishing markets and academic trends. In recent years, due to the change in the general ecosystem of research libraries, the rise of digital publishing, and the shrinking budget resources, UCB Library has seen a decline of collection expertise as reflected by a shrinking team of selectors and subject experts.

This is a troubling trend. Research libraries have to rely on the expertise pool of their in-house staff who manage various collections to suit the changing needs of academic programs on campus, nationally and internationally. Without a competent and scholarly-attuned team of collection management librarians and selectors, the future of Berkeley's research collections is at stake.

...

The bottomline question is -- does UCB Library still aspire to be a world-class research library with collections that can support almost all research activities, or does it want to fall to a mediocre research library? This is a fundamental question for the entire Berkeley academic community. The answer, whichever it might be, will have a major effect on the retention of the best faculty and students in this great university.”

—Peter Zhou, Head of the East Asian Library

Staffing Summary

Our findings and peer comparisons make clear that staff reductions, including effective reductions that occur when the need to staff new services displaces existing responsibilities onto fewer people, imperil all that the Library provides. To protect our academic mission we must halt the attrition in professional and support staff and achieve staffing levels necessary to **reestablish selector librarian expertise** across all areas of research on campus (including newly emerging areas). In addition, we must increase staff as called for the 2013 Report in order to restore the Library to the quality we envision for Berkeley as the premier public university, to fulfill the vision for the Moffitt project, digitization of analog materials, e-reserves, timely delivery of materials from NRLF and via interlibrary loan, and to provide access and services during hours when students and faculty need them (as discussed more fully below). Funding requirements to satisfy these needs are presented, in combination with funding for the needs articulated for collections and space, in the [Executive Summary](#).

SPACE

Introduction

In addition to and in conjunction with its collections and staff, the Library provides vital spaces for research, study, and collaboration. This *space* component of the Library—and the more intangible sense of intellectual *place* that it enables, has long been understood as an important common good for the campus community as a whole. As overall enrollment increases and housing prices and scarcity force students into more distant and/or crowded living situations, the demand for this common good has been increasing.

Despite pressing needs for the types of spaces it has traditionally provided, budget shortfalls have prompted the Library to dramatically decrease total hours of service compared to pre-pandemic levels, and to launch a Long Term Space Plan (released for comment in [October 2022](#), revised, and approved by the EVCP in [February 2023](#)) that includes the closure of three libraries (with collections to be merged with other existing libraries) and raises the possibility of further curtailment of operating hours at others.

By reducing the number of physical spaces managed by the Library, this plan arguably prioritizes provision of the common goods that only the Library can supply (collections and librarian expertise) over common goods that can be provided, to some extent, outside of the Library (space for study, research, and collaboration).⁶ Especially for students who access study and research resources (books, journals, and even consultations with librarians) primarily online, adequate study and research space need not be physically located in a library. This is true for both individual study and research and collaborative intellectual engagement.

Using this prioritization strategy to deal with reduced or stagnant library budgets is insufficient for two reasons. First, although in theory some necessary study, research, and collaboration spaces could be provided outside the auspices of the Library, and although there seems to be widespread agreement on campus about the importance of such spaces as a common good, there does not appear to be a functioning campus mechanism for planning, funding, and implementing the provision of such spaces. This may be related to the fact that the shortage of such spaces, as described in campus documents like the [Campus Master Plan](#) (which highlights the shortage of of

⁶ Though collections expenditures have also been cut by a comparable percentage, as we discuss in the section on collections, above.

“touchdown spaces on campus to gather and study between classes”),⁷ does not fully capture the range of needs such spaces serve. This means that seemingly sensible consolidation of library services could result in a permanent loss of critical spaces (and the intellectual communities that form in those spaces)—even though in theory those spaces could be maintained outside the auspices of the Library. We understand there is an effort underway to formulate a new [Student Life Master Plan](#) which may provide an opportunity for more comprehensive and proactive planning (and funding and implementation) to ensure that this type of loss does not occur in the future. At the moment, however, campus needs more immediate and effective provision of common study space that is convenient, safe, and open during the hours when students need it.

Second, the Library’s budget situation (expenses in excess of revenue and exhausted reserves) means that reduction in availability of library spaces impacts not only uses that could (in theory) be conducted elsewhere on campus. Reductions in hours of access and service also impact activities that can happen nowhere else but the Library—including, for example, research that can only be conducted in the same physical location as key non-circulating collections.

The following sections describe in more detail usage and value of library spaces and how the availability of those spaces has changed over time, to the detriment of our students and faculty, and of our ability to fulfill our academic mission.

Usage and value of library spaces

In recent years the University Library and the Academic Senate’s Library Committee have repeatedly sought feedback from the community about library space planning. Several themes emerge from our review of that feedback. Here we highlight input from undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and library staff.

Undergraduate students. Comments from undergraduate students convey the strong sense that there is inadequate study space on campus and that the few spaces that are open long hours and on weekends are too crowded. A comment from an undergraduate student responding to the Library’s draft Long Term Space plan is representative:

“A lack of [24-hour and extended hours library spaces] is very immediately felt by students who don't have a quiet/clean space to study after hours. Moffit has served as such a space after it reopened as a 24-hour library,

⁷ See, e.g., 2022 [Campus Master Plan](#) 16 (“High priority space needs include community spaces, collaboration space, and classrooms. . . .The space needs model was confirmed through stakeholder feedback and on-campus observations, which verified deficits in dining areas, recreational facilities, and touchdown spaces on campus to gather and study between classes.”).

but students flock to it when all of the other libraries have closed which can make it very crowded. The existence of multiple 24-hour libraries would be very helpful.”

Graduate students who serve as GSIs observe this problem for undergraduates as well, as this comment illustrates:

“At the same time that the university is increasing the student population, it is also reducing the amount of space students have available to work, and the resources available to them for research. As a GSI, I constantly field questions about how students can study and do their research on this campus - not questions about strategy or study skills (those would be expected anywhere) but questions about physical space and infrastructure. Questions about study tables. Questions about where to explore the literature on their research topic. Questions about where they can go to find a few hours of quiet amid the constant clamor of an overcrowded university. It's embarrassing to have no answers for those questions. It's embarrassing that students who have spent their whole academic lives working hard to get into Berkeley arrive here and find a university that seems so uninterested in their day-to-day learning needs. Their disappointment is palpable and completely justified.”

One graduate student offered an insightful comment about the disparate impact of the shortage of study space:

“I would encourage the university to consider which populations would be primarily affected by having fewer spaces to congregate and study in. For students without quiet spaces in their own homes or students without safe, stable homes, reducing library access would reduce their ability to succeed.”

In other words, ***reductions in available study space (including during evenings and weekends) work against the university's stated commitment to equity and inclusion.***

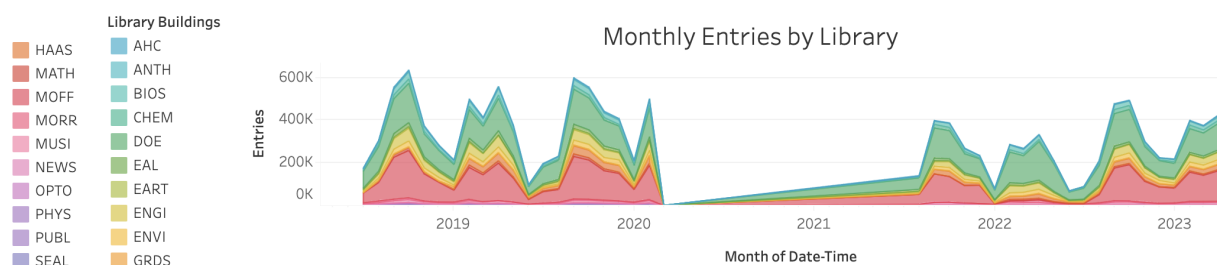
Having reviewed this and other comments, we agree with this point in the summary in the Library's [Long Term Space Plan](#):

“For years, our libraries have provided the majority of campus study spaces, but the expanded enrollment and the reduced Library budget have created a widening gap. Numerous students mentioned the overcrowding

of current spaces and their desperation to find suitable spaces to focus, be productive, find camaraderie and inspiration, and buoy their mental health by working alongside others in similar academic pursuits.”

The data on library usage shows that foot traffic (monthly entries) has been increasing since the pandemic. This chart shows monthly entries, with different colors representing different libraries.⁸

Figure 5: Monthly Entries by Library, Source UC Berkeley Library



Although these data appear to suggest that usage is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, the data for the post-pandemic period record the total number of library entries at a time when the libraries’ open hours were significantly reduced. In other words, almost as many people are using the Library’s physical spaces as before the pandemic, but they are doing so during much narrower bands of time. Indeed, if we divide the total number of Library entries by total open hours, it becomes clear that entries per hour had returned to Fall 2019 levels by Fall 2021.⁹

The space problem is thus twofold: insufficient space (overcrowding) during open hours (e.g., students sitting on the floor of Moffitt Library every day during Fall and Spring semesters), and greatly reduced availability during evening and weekend hours, which for many students — since so many of them have jobs on or off campus — are the hours when they need to study and conduct research.

⁸ Five comparisons for specific units (monthly entries for Sept. 2018 vs. Sept. 2022): Doe (163,130 vs. 152,399), Graduate Services (4,106 vs. 3,084), Anthropology (4,341 vs. 1,461), Bioscience (27,005 vs. 22,707), Music (10,375 vs. 11,091).

⁹ There may be a selection bias in this calculation: some of the hours that the Library chose to close at various locations were generally the lowest use hours, which might induce an increase in hourly entries. However, because costs of staffing evening and weekend hours are higher, and some of those are among the highest hours of use, there is also a potential bias in the other direction. We do not have a more recent comparable calculation of hourly entries because the most heavily trafficked library, Moffitt, was closed for seismic renovation in Spring 2022, which also anomalously affects entries to Gardner Stacks and Doe Library, and staff have not done the complicated data gathering and analysis of hours and entries by location for Fall 2023 or Spring 2023 as of this writing.

The next table compares open hours at University Library locations in Fall 2019 vs. Fall 2023 (anticipated).¹⁰ As substantial as the overall reduction is (cutting nearly 30%), it masks an even more substantial reduction (approaching 50%) when one looks only at weekend hours (weekends are the primary study time for many students) or only at hours at locations apart from the Doe/Moffitt center.

Table 5: University Library Public Hours Fall 2019 vs. Fall 2023, Source UC Berkeley Library

	F 2019	F 2023	% reduction
Total hours/week, all locations	1333	951	29%
Total weekend hours, all locations	201	102	49%
Hours/week, locations outside the Doe/Moffitt complex	784	469	40%

The sense that available study and collaboration space on campus is inadequate is echoed in observations in the Campus Master Plan.¹¹

The importance of study space available over long opening hours is also confirmed by comparisons to peer institutions. For example, [UCLA](#) lists 12 libraries on its main library homepage, plus links to nine “other campus libraries and archives.” No library appears to be open 24-hours, but many are open long hours (e.g., 8am-11pm) and all except the regional storage facility are open at least 10am-5pm M-F. [Michigan](#) lists 16 libraries on campus (plus one at a remote research facility). Two are open 24 hours. One of these is the newly-renovated “Clark Commons,” which “offers individual and collaborative study areas, plus spaces to consult with library experts by appointment.” This location is open 24-hours on weekdays (with ID card access from midnight to 8am). Harvard lists 29 library locations and has a “[find a space](#)” feature on its website. During the school year there appear to be two Harvard libraries with [24-hour access](#) Monday through Thursday.

Graduate students. A recurring theme in comments from graduate students is that libraries (especially, in some cases, subject specialty libraries connected to their fields) serve as their *de facto* offices, without which they would have nowhere on campus to do

¹⁰ Separately tabulated UL locations within Doe/Moffitt include Doe and Moffitt themselves, Art History/Classics, Graduate Services, Main Stacks, Media Resources, and Morrison. Affiliated libraries not under the UL aegis are not tabulated.

¹¹ 2022 [Campus Master Plan](#) 16 (“High priority space needs include community spaces, collaboration space, and classrooms. . . .The space needs model was confirmed through stakeholder feedback and on-campus observations, which verified deficits in dining areas, recreational facilities, and touchdown spaces on campus to gather and study between classes.”).

their work. Graduate students in some fields (Classics and Art History, in particular) stress the importance of having access, over long hours, to non-circulating collections that they must frequently consult to conduct their work. Graduate students also stress the value of subject specialty libraries as sites for intellectual community. These comments are representative:

“I remember saying, multiple times, during my first years in the program: ‘well, we don’t have graduate space in the department... but at least we have the library.’ ... The proposed closure of the Anthropology Library would be a horrible blow for graduate student life and cohesion in our department. This is already something that we struggle with — life as a graduate student in our department often feels very disconnected & individuated — and the closure of this library would make it significantly more so for future cohort of anthropology graduate students.”

“I am writing regarding the proposal to transition the Art History/Classics library into a satellite library. The reduced hours are particularly of concern for me. AH/C has been [a] vital location in my time here, with many resources that are only reliably accessed in that space. The collection there has core primary (like standard editions of texts and commentaries) and secondary (like landmark studies, periodicals, and journal volumes) sources that have aided me in my classes, my personal research, and in my teaching experience. Moreover, it is a non-circulating collection, and reduced hours would mean reduced access to the collection. When I am writing a research paper, I spend hours upon hours a day in AH/C, looking at, e.g, plates of how Greek triremes were represented in pottery, or studies on Greek epigraphy, and this is all outside of my regular class and teaching hours. How will I be able to use these resources in an impactful way if my other academic obligations eclipse the reduced hours? These are all also resources other researchers and graduate students might need, and the reduced hours will make it more difficult for us all to share the collection. In addition to all this, AH/C is also a communal space for us. A workspace in that room, with my bookends sharing a table with my colleagues’, has kept me from feeling isolated within academia, and that is a rare thing.”

“I love my department and chose to return here for another number of years because of the support and resources offered to me - namely, the map library, which provides students with just as much research support as our overworked advisors.

The map library in McCone is a specialist library with specialist librarians for geospatial and cartography professionals, such as myself. This library is now only open 4 hours a day during peak seminar times, making it impossible for most graduate, undergraduate students, and faculty to make use of the space and its materials, including its 250,000 maps, expensive geospatial software, and equipment.

I am here to advocate for this library's return to actual workable hours and operating capacity, because without it my research and the research of my colleagues becomes extremely difficult if not impossible. I can imagine this is the same for many of my colleagues in other departments.

It should go without saying, but clearly this needs to be said, what is a research university without the facilities required to do research? This is not a long-term solution, but a clear disregard for all the people who pour their time, energy, and dedication into their work which makes the functioning of this institution possible.”

Faculty. Faculty comments echo graduate student comments about the importance of spaces co-located with particularly important collections. These illustrative comments are from letters the Library Committee received from department chairs:

“Libraries are one of our ‘laboratory spaces.’ They are essential to our research and teaching We depend upon an array of materials — monographs, multi-author anthologies, digitized journals and books, undigitized books and periodicals and books and periodicals that require first-hand material access, undigitized large-format volumes, and archival materials.... We routinely use materials that require material access, and we have worked hard to develop, protect, and use these collections.... Many of these publications include analogue photographs that, in type, history, and quality, cannot be digitally substituted.... Our activities demand not merely ‘study spaces’ but study spaces symbiotic with accessible collections.”

“From the perspective of graduate funding, we are already at a disadvantage in relation to top PhD programs at places like Princeton and Stanford, which have magnificent general collections as well as excellent dedicated subject libraries. A university that has *also* given up on making its library a place where serious research can be done with any sort of convenience or efficiency will just not be able to compete with the PhD programs at these institutions—not in our field, anyway.”

Library Staff. Some library staff see a misfit between the space usage needs of students and the key mission of the library and librarians. Here is a representative comment:

“Spaces should be used as human to human contact points during hours when staffing is viable rather than spaces devoid of collections and services open late and which allow food which is not the library's mission/goal which is providing access to collections.”

Library consolidation

The [2013 Report](#) concluded “that some consolidation of Subject Specialty Libraries or service points, and modification of some services at those over two dozen service points, may be appropriate.”

In the years following that report, three subject specialty libraries were closed: Ed-Psych, Public Health, and Optometry.¹² In the [Long Term Space Plan](#), the Library describes plans to close three additional libraries (Anthropology, Mathematics-Statistics, and Physics-Astronomy) and merge their collections into collections at other existing locations.

The [Long Term Space Plan](#) identifies reasons that this latest round of consolidation might improve space usage and service delivery. For example, feedback on the draft plan from library staff:

“I'm thrilled by The Library's intention to replac[e] siloed practices with shared ones to evolve into a user-centered organization that promotes usability and engenders belonging.”

A few faculty comments also include observations about possible benefits of consolidation, like this one:

“Please merge as many libraries as possible, I find it very cumbersome to constantly have to go from one place to the other in search of books. it would be best to have everything centralized in one place (Doe ideally).”

But there also has been considerable unhappiness about the consolidation, as reflected in the vast majority of comments received on the draft Plan, its rejection by the Senate

¹² The draft Long Term Space Plan suggests that these closures were not part of a strategic plan: “In the past decade, most changes to Library spaces have been prompted by external factors, such as the poor seismic rating of Tolman Hall which led to the closure of the Education/Psychology Library.”

Library Committee, and the protests and negative media attention since the plan was finalized.

A big driver of the current round of consolidation is the lack of sufficient resources to maintain locations:

“The Library is operating with a smaller staff and fewer resources. Since 2003, student enrollment has increased 40 percent while inflation-adjusted campus Library funding per student has fallen by nearly half, 47 percent. The Library has 40 percent fewer employees than it did in 2003 — and 14 percent fewer than just four years ago, in 2018 — while the range of services has grown.”

The [Long Term Space Plan](#) acknowledges that libraries it has identified for closure/merger provide important spaces for study, collaboration, and intellectual community that will likely not be replicated in the merged locations. This raises the critical question: if it is too costly for the Library to provide these spaces, what should campus be doing to meet the need for study and intellectual community space? As reported in the Plan:

“Several people suggested that if some libraries are merged and closed, then the space should transition to study spaces. The Library agrees. This is the plan originally proposed by the Library with support from the campus’s Space Assignments and Capital Improvements committee (SACI) and the departments most closely aligned with the merging libraries have been extended an invitation to make a proposal for their desired future use of those spaces, such as continued quiet study spaces open to Berkeley students. . . .”

In the next section we elaborate on this problem.

Transitioning Library spaces without losing intellectual places

The Library itself cannot unilaterally offer assurances that continuity of vital physical and intellectual resources will occur after it vacates a space. Instead, under current practices that depends on departments making proposals for subsequent approval by the Space Assignments and Capital Improvements Committee (SACI). This is the case even though these study and community spaces constitute common goods that (as the comments we reviewed confirm) are often used by community members from outside the most relevant departments. Indeed, in our conversation with the Vice Provost for Academic Planning and her staff, they emphasized the importance of study and

collaboration spaces that are open to all students. And yet the continued provision of these common goods in decommissioned library spaces appears to depend on departments taking the initiative (and bearing the expense) of planning, proposing, and managing such spaces.

This presents a classic collective action problem. As a centrally-funded entity that serves the entire campus, the Library solves this collective action problem. When the Library withdraws from a space and leaves its future dependent on the initiative and resources of individual units, the collective action problem will predictably reemerge. This presents the risk that Library consolidation will lead to a net loss in these vital common resources. This is true even if, in theory, the resources could be provided more effectively outside of the Library—e.g., in spaces that do not house valuable library collections that require relatively expensive security and staffing. And it is certainly true if the relevant departments do not have the resources required to manage the spaces themselves.

Based on our conversations with the Vice Provost and staff, new buildings being constructed on campus (the Gateway Building, the Bechtel expansion, the Undergraduate Academic Building in the site of the Dwinelle parking lot) were designed to include open spaces appropriate for study and collaboration. It is not clear however whether all community members will have access to those spaces, nor what their quality will be¹³ (and note that the 377 study seats available in the Engineering Library will be unavailable during construction). More generally, our sense from these conversations is that commitments to common goods like study and collaboration spaces, expressed in aspirational documents like the Campus Master Plan, do not always come to fruition when projects are implemented—especially when they are implemented by individual units using private funds. We also learned that there is no central resource that even identifies the locations and capacities of all such spaces on campus—which we speculate could be both a cause and a result of the lack of central planning and stewardship.

Some available spaces on campus (e.g. space vacated by cafés that are no longer operating) have not been devoted to study and collaboration space due to lack of funding for staffing. Again, this strikes us as a collective action problem that campus should solve. According to the Library’s Long Term Space Plan, it seems ideal to solve it outside of the Library—allowing the Library to focus on functions that are tied to Library collections and the unique expertise of Library staff.¹⁴ Interviewees suggested, for

¹³ For example, the Undergraduate Academic Building plans do include shared study spaces, but they will be situated in “outdoor niches.”

¹⁴ The Library’s draft Long Term Space Plan took this view: “[I]ncreasing enrollment has put special pressure on the central campus to provide many services to support the student experience, not least of which is study space. As the campus community grows and the Library budget shrinks, it seems clear that all student study space need not — and indeed cannot — be centered in and managed by the Library.”

example, that study and collaboration space could include classrooms that are not used at night or on weekends, and/or office space that is currently unused due to flexible work arrangements. As for funding, those interviewees suggested the possibility of a new Student Services Fee to support the provision and operation of study spaces. If there is no realistic prospect of funding and charging another entity on campus to take responsibility for planning and operating such spaces in a way that serves the needs of the entire campus, then the Library should be funded at levels that will enable it to coordinate the need for such spaces with its provision of spaces in the service of its core mission.

Hours of operation and access to vital collections

In addition to planned consolidations, the [Long Term Space Plan](#) addresses the range of services (and operating hours) to be provided at different types of libraries. The plan designates existing libraries as either “hub,” “satellite,” or “by appointment” libraries. Hub libraries will offer the most extensive services and hours. Satellite libraries “will offer a shorter menu of services, and may have shorter hours if budgets are reduced” and by-appointment libraries “will allow for access to collections and in-person research help through online requests and pickups at other locations; they will not offer walk-in service or browsing.”

We have documented above the dramatic cuts in Library operating hours compared to pre-pandemic levels. The [Long Term Space Plan](#) raises the specter of additional reductions in hours of satellite libraries:

“Satellite libraries may include collections for browsing along with spaces to focus on academic work in a smaller, more intimate environment; they will offer a shorter menu of services, and may have shorter hours if budgets are reduced.”

The Plan further reflects on user comments on the role of specialized libraries:

“People noted that the smaller, specialized libraries often have niche materials that may not be duplicated elsewhere on campus and are essential to their studies for consultation or browsing, even if available only as non-circulating items. Restricted hours could severely diminish access for researchers and teachers and further marginalize those disciplines. In the earlier consultation process, the Library was asked to suggest what the hours would be for the satellite libraries; the Library committed to these libraries being open at least four hours per weekday.

Specific hours are determined according to the staffing available and their schedules, and users clearly stated that the longest possible hours were ideal.”

A department chair noted that even some “hub” libraries have insufficient hours:

“Our faculty are concerned that our main and subject-specialty libraries have very limited hours compared to the libraries of our peer institutions. . . . To be open in the evening and on weekends is a basic service of a campus library.”

These comments demonstrate how recent and ongoing shortfalls in the Library funding, and the exhaustion of reserves, are now cutting into the bone of our world-class university. Prioritizing the preservation of collections and expert staff over spaces is no longer a sustainable solution when it means the faculty and students who rely on those collections and staff cannot feasibly access them to conduct their work (and, as noted above, collections and staff are suffering as well). In some fields, there is no electronic substitute for access to our physical collections, the enormous value of which is squandered if they cannot be used.

Space summary

Our study of Library spaces makes clear that current support for the Library is insufficient to ensure adequate allocation, maintenance, and staffing of library spaces for **individual and collaborative study and research**, particularly in connection with the use of library collections and information services. It is also inadequate to ensure adequate allocation, maintenance, and staffing of library service points to allow **access to collections** (including special collections, and curated collections held in subject specialty libraries), **access to information professional services**, and **sufficient work space collocated** with collections that do not circulate, at least during normal business hours and some evening and weekend hours. And the pressure on the Library to provide space is exacerbated by the lack of an **overall campus scheme** for planning, providing, and managing student individual and collaborative study spaces. Our recommendations for addressing these needs are presented, in combination with funding for the needs articulated for Collections and Space, in the [Executive Summary](#).

CONCLUSION

Years of reductions in the Library's spending power, coupled with new and increasing costs and the exhaustion of the Library's discretionary reserves, have forced the Library to institute a program of reductions that have further, and deeply, sacrificed the core values of human expertise, resource discoverability, and preservation that were central to the 2013 report and that remain central to the Library's mission. That mission is, in turn, critical to the academic mission of the campus. We are at the point where failing to address this problem in the short term endangers the long-term health of the Library and therefore of the entire campus.

APPENDICES

Work Group Consultation

- Lisa Alvarez-Cohen, Vice Provost for Academic Planning, May 25, 2023
- Jim Church, Librarian for Economics, Political Economy, and International Government Information, May 2023
- Holly Doremus, Professor and Law and Chair of the Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation, June 24, 2023
- Jennifer Dorner, Librarian for History, History of Science & Technology, Interdisciplinary Studies, May 2023
- Elizabeth Dupuis, Senior Associate University Librarian for Educational Initiatives, User Services, and Strategic Projects and Director of Doe, Moffitt and the Subject Specialty Libraries, May 2023
- Susan Edwards, Head of Social Sciences Divisions, May 2023
- Maria Garcia-Alvarez, Principal Space Planner, May 25, 2023
- Mark Hemhauser, Head of Acquisitions, May 2023
- Salwa Ismail, Associate University Librarian for Digital Initiatives and Information Technology, May 2023
- Chan Li, Assessment Program Librarian, May-June 2023
- Oliver O'Reilly, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, June 30, 2023
- Claude Potts, Librarian for Romance Language Collections, May 2023
- Brian Quigley, Head, Engineering and Physical Sciences Division, Interim Head Life & Health Sciences Division, May 2023
- Abby Scheel, Head of Arts & Humanities Division, May 2023
- Andrew Scott Weiss, Academic Space Planner, May 25, 2023
- Virginia Shih, Curator for Southeast Asia and Buddhist Studies Collections, May 2023
- Jesse Silva, Scholarly Resources Strategy Librarian, May 2023
- Stephen Sutton, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, June 27, 2023
- Susan Swarts, former Associate University Librarian for Administration and Organizational Effectiveness, May 2023
- Peter Zhou, Director and Assistant University Librarian C. V. Starr East Asian Library, May 2023

Committee Membership & Support Staff

- Molly Van Houweling, Professor, Law (Co-Chair)
- Jeff MacKie Mason, University Librarian (Co-Chair)
- Marianne Constable, Professor, Rhetoric

- Charles Faulhaber, former Bancroft Library Director and Professor, Spanish & Portuguese
 - Andrew Garrett, Professor, Linguistics
 - Mark Haiman, Professor, Math
 - Jo Anne Newyear Ramirez, University Library, Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Research
 - Panos Papadopoulos, Professor, Mechanical Engineering
 - Mary Ann Smart, Professor, Music and Academic Senate Chair
-
- Heidi Hallett, Director of Business and Finance Services, University Library,
 - Sumali Tuchrello, Project Policy Analyst, Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost