Options for Library Collection Space Planning

With the start of the Addition and Renovation project planned for early 2013, the Library faces significant challenges in shaping the configuration of its physical collections, both in the immediate preconstruction period and in the years ahead. The Library's survey of faculty and graduate students about their use of the collections and preferences of access has provided us with critical data to plan for and to shape collections strategically. The results show that although print books are still very important, there is broad willingness to wait for a short (1-3 days) or longer (3 days to 2 weeks) period of time for retrieval from offsite storage.[1] There is also broad support for removing print volumes of online journals from the Library, especially for journals that are preserved in a secure and permanent online archive such as JSTOR. Although there are no perfect solutions to the Library's space challenges, these and other survey results suggest six broad strategies, detailed below, for achieving the necessary preconstruction onsite collection reduction with the least impact to research and teaching. The data on behaviors and preferences also point to some options for the Library to develop enhanced access services that can mitigate increased reliance on offsite storage, such as online tables of contents, online browsing by call number, a schedule of frequent offsite retrievals, and office delivery.

It is important to note that none of the options listed below call for withdrawing collection content in the sense that some materials that were once accessible will be accessible no longer. Rather, given the immediate imperative to reduce the onsite collections, the objective of the Library Collection Space Planning Initiative was to develop the best possible methods of access to all of the materials in the Library's current collection, in the manner they are used and with the least impact to research and teaching.
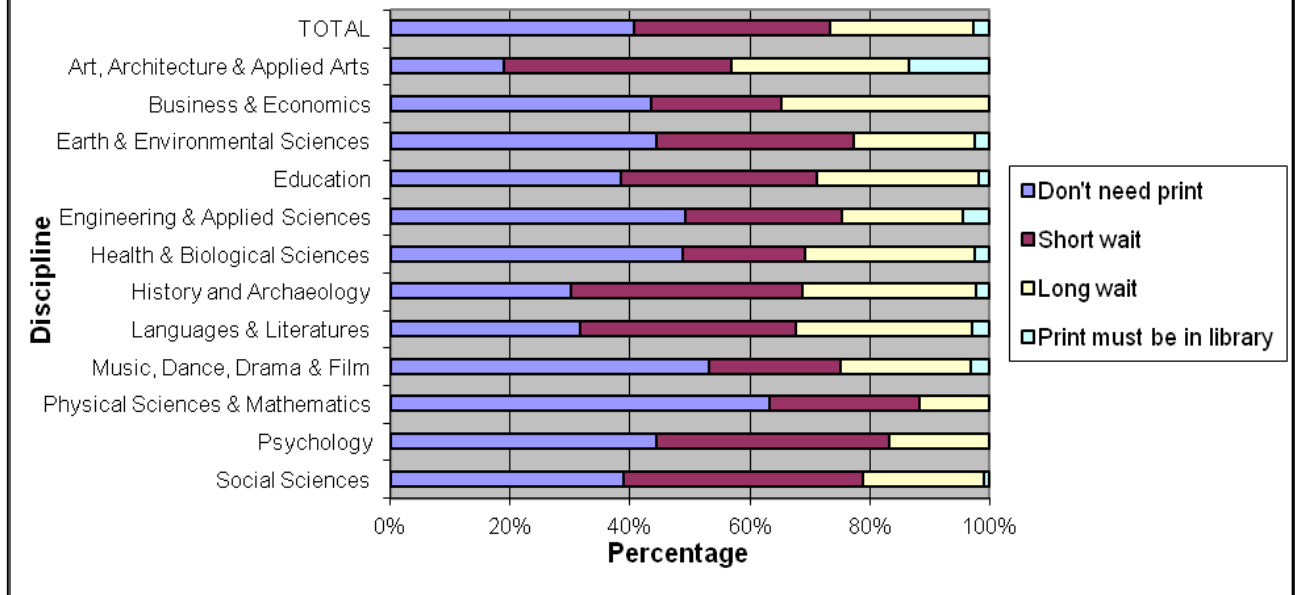
Space Planning Options

1. Relocate to local offsite storage print volumes for journals that the Library has cancelled in print but provides access to online.

   This option is supported by respondents' answers when asked whether print copies of online journals are needed; if needed, whether they must be located in the Library; and if located off-site, whether short or long retrieval times are acceptable (question 12.2). Fewer than 3 percent of all respondents said that print is needed in the Library. A majority indicated willingness to wait for retrieval of print copies stored off-site, and just over 40 percent said that print copies of journals available online are not needed at all. (See figure 1.)

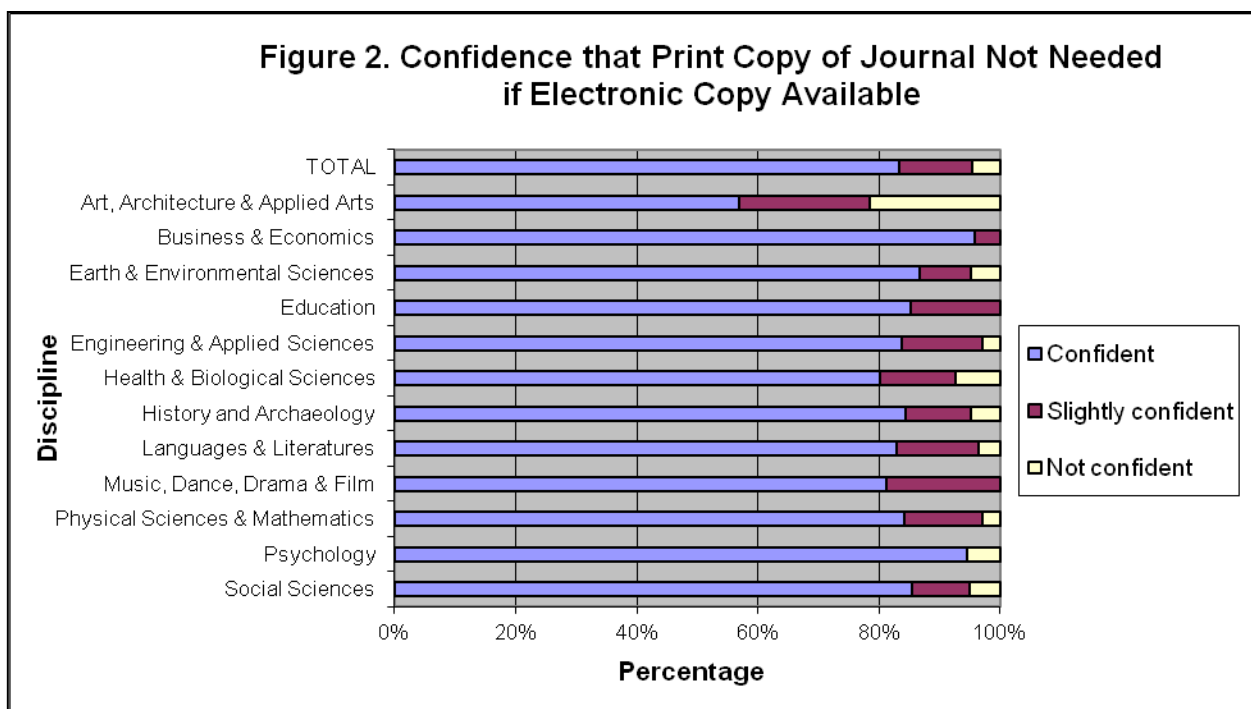[1] The confidence level for the survey results is 99% and the margin of error is 4.2%.

Figure 1. Acceptable Retrieval Times for Journals Not Housed in Library (But Available Online)

The survey also asked respondents whether they use the Library's print version of an article, even if the article is available online (question 10). This question did not ask whether print is needed in the Library, but the responses provide a measure of support for Option 1, since fewer than 15 percent of all respondents said that they use the print "often," fewer than 20 percent said "sometimes," and 66 percent said "not often." When asked how confident they are that a print copy of a journal available online is not needed in the Library when the print is retrievable from local storage within 1 business day, only 4.1 percent of all respondents said that they were "not confident" (question 9.2).

2. Relocate or withdraw print journals for which access and preservation is secure in a permanent and persistent archive such as JSTOR.

In all disciplines except Art, Architecture, and Applied Arts, at least 80 percent of respondents expressed confidence that when journals are accessible online and secure in a permanent archive, print copies are not needed in the Library; fewer than 5 percent of all respondents were "not confident" (question 9.1; see figure 2). Implementation of this option would be subject to review and oversight of librarian subject specialists, including which journal titles to select, and whether the print volumes of those selected are relocated to local offsite storage or withdrawn. Print journals in Art, Architecture, and Applied Arts will not be withdrawn. Print volumes that are withdrawn from the Library's holdings would still be accessible, but the retrieval time would be slightly longer (3–5 days) than for volumes relocated to local storage (1–2 days), since a withdrawn volume, if requested, would require retrieval from the Southern Regional Library Facility (SRLF) in Los Angeles, UC's shared storage facility of permanent collections.

Figure 2. Confidence that Print Copy of Journal Not Needed if Electronic Copy Available

3. Relocate to local offsite storage selected, previously cancelled journal titles, implementation subject to review and oversight by librarian subject specialists. This oversight is important because of disciplinary differences in behaviors and preferences as evidenced by survey results. The lists of journals to be reviewed are titles that have been cancelled during previous serials review projects for which the faculty provided oversight. These may include titles that do not have online editions. Articles, or the entire runs of volumes, will be retrievable within a day and may be used onsite in local storage.

   This option could account for a substantial portion of the needed reduction of the onsite collections. Like the other five, its justification lies in the survey results, though less directly. Ninety percent of all respondents said that once they have identified a *book* they want, it is acceptable to wait for offsite retrieval, and only ten percent indicated that print must be located in the Library (question 14). From this response it is reasonable to infer wide acceptance of offsite storage and retrieval of journal articles as well. Supporting this inference are the high percentages of respondents across the survey sample who said that they depend on electronic resources as starting points for research and teaching (e.g., Web search engines, electronic resources covering various disciplines such as Web of Science, and discipline-specific databases), since a primary purpose of these resources is to provide bibliographic access to the contents of academic journals (question 3). For example, nearly 90 percent of the survey sample said that they depend on an electronic resource like Web of Science or JSTOR as a starting point.

4. Relocate to local offsite storage selected older editions of books for which the Library holds more recent editions, in disciplines where fewer than 20 percent of the respondents said that these are important to their research and teaching (question 8.4).

Disciplines in which fewer than 20 percent of respondents said that older editions are important are Business and Economics, Education, and all of the sciences. Implementation of this option, like the questions above, would be subject to review and oversight by librarian subject specialists.

5. Relocate to local offsite storage selected non-English books in disciplines where fewer than 20 percent of respondents said that these are important for their research and teaching (question 8.5).
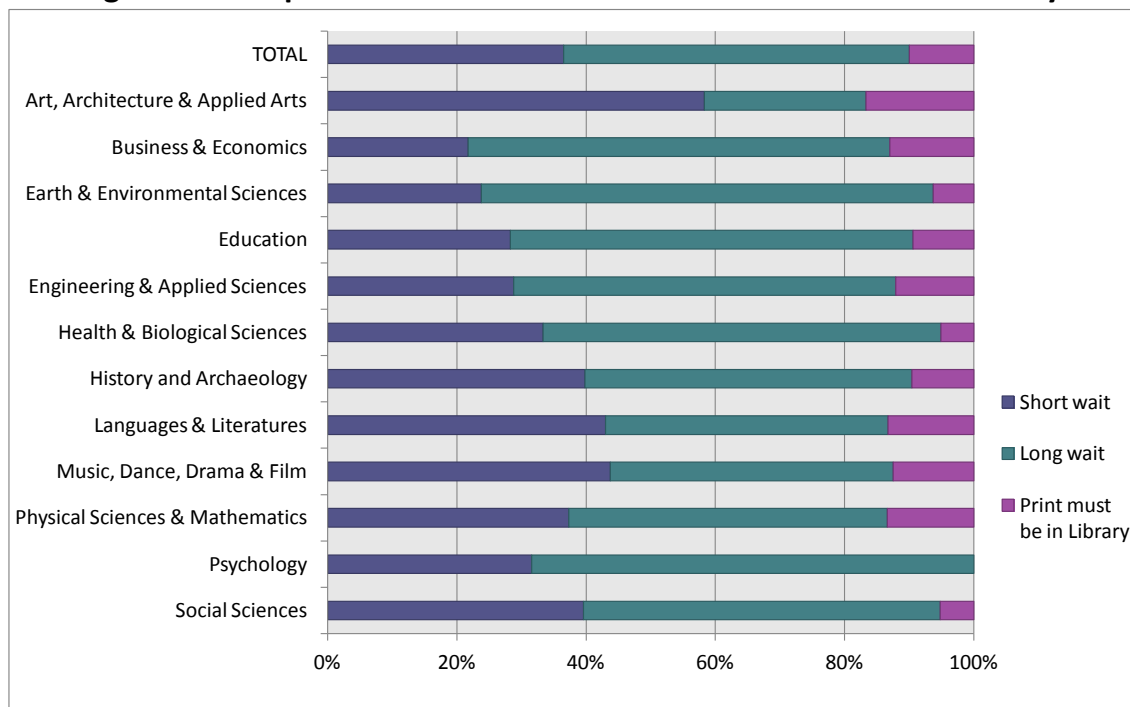
   Disciplines in which fewer than 20 percent of respondents said that non-English books are important are Business and Economics, and all of the sciences. Implementation of this option would be subject to review and oversight by librarian subject specialists.

6. Relocate to local offsite storage selected older books; for example, selected titles published more than twenty years ago that have not circulated in over ten years.

   Implementation of this option, like several of the others, would be subject to review and oversight by librarian subject specialists. Here this is especially important because of disciplinary differences in behaviors and preferences regarding use of books that the survey brings to light.

   A key outcome of the survey is that high percentages of respondents in all disciplines expressed willingness to wait for offsite retrieval, once they have identified a book they want; significantly, only 10 percent of all respondents said that print must be in the Library (question 14, see figure 3). In the sciences and social sciences, a majority said that a long wait (3 days to two weeks) was acceptable, whereas respondents in the humanities were more closely divided in their preference for a short (1-3 days) or long wait, with the strongest preference for the former expressed by Art, Architecture, and Applied Arts (70 percent).

Figure 3. Acceptable Retrieval Times for Books Not Housed in Library

The survey results uncovered other clear differences among the humanities, social sciences, and sciences in behaviors and preferences relative to accessing books in the Library's collections. While print books are still very important for all disciplines, they are most important for the humanities. Ninety-two percent of respondents in the humanities said that a print copy of a book is important even when an electronic version is available, compared to 78 and 64 percent respectively for the social sciences and sciences (question 7.2).[2] Compared to the social sciences and sciences, respondents in the humanities also reported more use of books in the Library without necessarily checking them out (question 5), although only in Art, Architecture, and Applied Arts did more than 50 percent of respondents say that they "often" use books in this way (62 percent for Art, Architecture, and Applied Arts; 45.6 mean percentage for humanities disciplines, 17.4 for social sciences, and 9.8 for sciences).

Enhanced Access Services

To mitigate impacts to research and teaching from the relocation of these selected materials, the Library will pursue the development of enhanced access and retrieval services. For example, processes to expedite offsite retrieval will be explored. Under specific scenarios, most users find it acceptable that materials are located offsite and retrieved within a short period of time (question 6, question 12 and question 13). The importance to researchers of the availability of specific features of a book is addressed in responses to question 6. Identifying the responses of highest importance, augmentation or development of specific services addressing these will be pursued.

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[2] These are mean percentages for all disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences respectively.