UCSB Library

Planning for Long-Term Collection Access and Preservation

The UCSB Library has long relied on off-site storage for collection materials that have research value but are infrequently used. For over thirty years the Library, with guidance from the faculty, has sent low-demand materials to the UC Southern Regional Library Facility in Los Angeles (SRLF), one of two systemwide high-density collection storage centers that all UC libraries rely on for permanent preservation of their extensive holdings and for providing access to meet research and teaching needs. Since the early 1990s, the UCSB Library has also leased a local facility, the main Annex, as additional housing for little-used materials, primarily back runs of journals. Even with the recent completion of the building and renovation project, the Library will continue to rely on off-site storage into the future to make room for new collections. New space that resulted from the project was allocated to house special collections and address demand for collaborative study spaces; for the general collections, the project resulted in a net loss of space because of the required 14-percent reduction of the 8-story tower collection due to seismic retrofitting.

At an annual cost to the Library of more than a quarter million dollars for lease, upkeep, and staff, maintaining the Annex diverts support for acquisition of new collection content and does not meet changing expectations of UCSB faculty and students for efficient access to information resources. A more fiscally responsible strategy for storing and accessing the Library’s low-demand materials, and one that would better serve campus needs, is to rely exclusively on the UC Regional Library Facilities (RLFs).

Justification

Service. For access to an article in a journal that is not shelved in the Library or available online, how important is local retrieval of the print volume if a pdf can be emailed? This is the key question in considering whether the service the Library provides by maintaining the Annex justifies the high cost. The RLFs provide an expedited online delivery service, with pdfs of requested articles usually received within 1-2 business days. The fast turnaround time would meet the expectations of UCSB faculty and students for convenient online access. If a print volume is needed rather than a pdf, it can be delivered from an RLF in 2-3 business days and loaned for a year. Duplicating a pdf service locally that is already available from the UC facilities would not be cost efficient for the Library.

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1 Journals in the main Annex circulate less than 7 percent the rate of the general collections located in the Library. The Library also leases a second annex that houses primarily special collections.
Storage. Collections in the RLFs are permanently housed in a secure, climate-controlled environment, whereas the lack of environmental controls in the Annex building, with fluctuations in temperature and humidity, is causing deterioration of the print materials and threatening their long-term preservation.

Discoverability. Collections in the RLFs are fully inventoried and discoverable in Melvyl, whereas Annex holdings are not fully inventoried nor easily discoverable in UCSB Library Search. In the next few years, the UC libraries will investigate and move toward an integrated systemwide library platform that will enable RLF materials along with UC campus collections to be discoverable as if they were a single collection.

Cost. The Library already pays annual fees for use of the RLFs, and these costs would not be affected whether or not the Annex lease continues. As stated above, the annual cost of the Annex exceeds $250,000. As a leased building, its future availability is not assured and the current fees are not fixed beyond this year.

Strategies

- Send to SRLF Annex journals that are not online and not held at either regional facility.

- For Annex journals that duplicate RLF holdings, rely on the RLF copies and remove the duplicates in compliance with UC policies.

- For Annex journals that are accessible to UCSB in a secure online archive such as JSTOR, rely on electronic access; depending on whether the physical journals duplicate RLF holdings, either send them to SRLF or remove them in compliance with UC policies.

- As exceptions, return a small number of journals to the Library based on usage data and review by subject librarians.

Looking ahead

By leveraging the shared UC facilities for sustainable collection access, UCSB will align with the other UC libraries, none of which divert limited funds to costly local storage for the general collections. Reliance on the RLFs for permanent, secure storage with expedited delivery of needed materials continues the long precedent of configuring UCSB Library collections to serve the research and instructional needs of the faculty. As collections continue to evolve toward a universe of online and physical resources in the Library, in UC facilities, and beyond UC, the Library remains committed to partnering with faculty to develop the best solutions for long-term access and preservation.

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2 The UC SanDiego Library houses print journals for the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) in local storage.