LIBRARY EFFICIENCIES

BACKGROUND
With a combined fiscal year 2009-2010 budget of $244 million, the University’s ten campus libraries and systemwide California Digital Library (CDL) are at a watershed. Campus library funding cuts have averaged around 20% since fiscal year 2008-2009, and the cost of library materials continues to outpace inflation, further increasing budgetary pressures. Expansion in academic and research programs continues to increase demand for library collection growth in all formats, and students continue to demand long hours and extended access to library facilities that provide technologically well-equipped and flexible learning environments. Constrained capital budgets put space allocation pressure on libraries, some of which occupy buildings in prime campus locations. Finally, the shift to digital materials requires new strategies for ensuring access to the information required to support UC’s mission.

GOAL
Building on a long history of resource-sharing and consolidated or coordinated service development, the UC libraries began a new phase of strategic planning in 2008-2009 to identify additional innovative, systemwide strategies to mitigate cuts, while reframing library services that support institutional missions and goals. In support, the Provost-appointed Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAc) convened a task force in Fall 2010 to help set context, direction, priorities, and goals.

SUCCESSES
For more than a decade, library resource-sharing has been facilitated by a number of services managed on a systemwide basis. Particular success has been achieved in licensing electronic journals, databases, and books on a systemwide basis using rigorous cost/benefit analyses; provision by CDL of shared technologies that support management and use of print and digital resources; efficient delivery of print materials among campuses; provision of shared digital reference services; shared high-density storage facilities; and digital conversion of (and online access to) 3 million+ monographs.

CHALLENGES
Budgets must be rebalanced to support new format and service expectations. Business and administrative policies and systems are not optimized for systemwide collaboration; sustainable funding models do not yet exist for processing and managing shared resources and services, and existing behaviors and expectations do not foster innovation or encourage well-founded risk-taking. Trusting relationships must be established and sustained among all parties to permit reliance on external partners to provide essential services.

Furthermore, intellectual property issues for digital resources remain unsettled.

INITIAL INVESTMENT
Start-up loan funding may be required for systems that will achieve additional efficiencies and for transition costs to support the reduction of the physical footprint for collections.

FISCAL RESULTS, CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED
Through historic systemwide actions, the libraries avoid up to $100 million per year in costs that they would incur if they were to attempt to achieve the same level of service acting independently. Further efficiencies in capital and operating costs are expected from this most recent round of strategic planning, but it is premature to estimate scale.

CURRENT ACTION AND NEXT STEPS
The SLASIAc task force will present initial findings in December 2010 recommending systemwide strategies and investments that the University needs to pursue to achieve efficiencies in library operations. The libraries and the task force are currently examining further efficiencies in capital and operating costs through:

1. Leveraging digital access and fostering external collaborations to reduce the costs of acquiring and managing redundant print collections. To this end, the libraries have endorsed the goal of developing the University of California Library Collection that comprises all print and digital formats, and are leading a grant-funded initiative, the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST), involving dozens of regional libraries to establish trusted shared print journal archives;
2. Greater consolidation of library services. The libraries have launched the Next Generation Technical Services initiative that seeks to consolidate, streamline, or outsource common processing functions in order to develop a single systemwide enterprise for acquiring and processing collections;
3. Greater coordination in collection development; and
4. Greater reliance on open-access materials to reduce expenditure on high-priced serial publications.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT
The UC libraries have been national and international leaders in developing new licensing approaches, supporting scholarly communication initiatives, and pioneering practical solutions for digital preservation. Building on their collective 30-year history of successful collaboration, the UC libraries are well-positioned to achieve the next level of collaborative service while continuing to ensure that the UC community has access to the most relevant array of world-class information sources in support of the research, teaching, and public service mission of UC.