Charge to a Task Force of the Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee

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The University of California has 10 campus libraries and the systemwide California Digital Library (CDL), with a combined budget of $244m (2009/10 adjusted budget). The libraries have a long history of strategic and collaborative planning and resource sharing facilitated by a number of services that are managed on a systemwide basis, including the Melvyl union catalog, two high-density storage facilities (located at Berkeley and UCLA), the California Digital Library (UCOP), and shared electronic acquisition and cataloging services for centrally licensed electronic resources (San Diego). It is estimated that through their use of systemwide services, the libraries avoid up to $100m/year in cost. That is, if they were to attempt to achieve the same level of collection and services they currently enjoy, but acted independently of one another, the libraries would spend up to $100m/yr more than they invest at present. Particular success has been achieved in:

- Licensing electronic resources (journals, databases, and increasingly, electronic books) through co-investments on a systemwide basis;
- Central provision by CDL of commonly required library IT systems to support the discovery, delivery, lending, and preservation of print and electronic resources;
- Efficient delivery of print materials among campuses;
- Provision of shared digital reference services;
- Sharing the cost of, and managing, high-density storage facilities; and
- Digital conversion of and online access to over 2.6 million monographs via the Google Books Project and membership in HathiTrust.

Cost savings that have accrued to these services have allowed the libraries not only to maintain very high levels of collections and services, but also to develop and expand those as users' demands increase and with the advance of new technologies.

Looking forward, the UC libraries are at a watershed.

- They have taken their share of cuts in the past two years at levels that vary across the campuses but that, in general, reflect the University's overall fiscal situation and hover around the 20% mark since 2008/09. There is every expectation that budgetary pressures will continue over the next several years, reflecting the long shadow of a global recession and the University's efforts to meet unfunded liabilities in its pension and retiree health benefits programs.

- The cost of library materials continues to outpace inflation, making the budgetary pressures even more acutely felt—between a third and a half of a library's budget goes towards the cost of library materials.

- Users' information service expectations continue to rise exponentially, reflecting both the increasing sophistication of users and the proliferation and increased ease of use of commercial online services. At the same time, patterns of library use and expectations pertaining to library services continue to evolve, as evident for example, in a survey conducted recently by the research group Ithaka S + R.[1]

- Academic and research program breadth within UC has continued to expand. Hitherto it has placed increasing demand for library collection growth in digital, print, and other formats. Going forward, the shape of the academic program, its pace of change and growth, and the demands it will place on the university library are issues that need to be addressed.

- The proliferation of commercial online services competes with libraries in the roles they have traditionally occupied.

- Students, particularly undergraduates, continue to demand long hours and extended access to library facilities that provide technologically well-equipped and flexible learning environments.

- Constrained capital budgets make space a scarce commodity and put space allocation pressure on libraries, some of which occupy buildings in prime campus locations.

- The shift to digital materials requires new strategies for ensuring access to the information required to support of the university's missions.

In response to the rapidly evolving changes in the economic environment, the UC libraries began a new phase of their strategic planning processes in 2008/09 in order to identify additional innovative systemwide strategies to mitigate cuts, while reframing library services that support institutional missions and goals in light of the pressures indicated above and the changing scholarly information environment.

Although local and systemwide strategies have been successfully implemented, progress will be enhanced and its pace quickened with concerted leadership action that establishes context, direction, priorities, and goals.

Accordingly, the Provost requests that the Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAC) convene a task force to recommend the systemwide strategies and investments that the University needs to pursue with regard to library services in light of the numerous environmental changes indicated above.

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[1] http://www.ithaka.org/ithaka-s-r/research/faculty-surveys-2000-2009/faculty-survey-2009

While it is expected that the task force will determine its own agenda, it should focus on the efficiencies that can be gained in library operations areas; the following are examples from which the task force can choose:

- greater systemwide or regional consolidation of library services and systems

- systemwide strategies for developing and managing both print and digital collections

- greater reliance on open-access materials

- reduced expenditure on high-priced serial publications

- use of library space

It will also need to advise on any new services that may be required of our libraries and on strategies for supporting them in an era of flat or declining library budgets.

The task force will be convened by SLASIAC convener Executive Vice Chancellor, Gene Lucas. It will consult as appropriate with relevant stakeholders including the System Senate Committee on Libraries and Scholarly Communications and the University Librarians. And it will submit an initial report with preliminary findings to SLASIAC and to me in December 2010, and a final report in February 2011.

In conducting its work, the task force will be informed of the systemwide strategies being pursued by the University librarians, the work of the California Digital Library, and of relevant trends in library services, expenditures, and use. To that end, it will be supported by Academic Planning, Programs and Coordination—a unit at the Office of the President under Vice Provost Dan Greenstein—which will also make available to it all relevant budget and planning information as may be requested.