

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

Project LEND

## Why the University of California Needs Project LEND

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University of California Libraries  
Project LEND Steering Committee



# Why the University of California Needs Project LEND

The University of California libraries have launched a landmark research project to investigate the potential for expanded lawful use of digitized books held by academic and research libraries. Project LEND (Library Expansion of Networked Delivery) is a two-year project – endorsed by the Council of University Librarians (CoUL) – that the UC Davis Library will lead on behalf of the 10-campus UC system.

This project is grounded in the experience that UC faculty, clinicians, staff, and students had during the pandemic. UC Libraries, like hundreds of other academic libraries, were closed during the early months of the pandemic, and began offering greater access to digital books as an emergency measure. These programs met an immediate need — and raised a host of questions about copyright law, the role of libraries, and the potential for technology-enabled research and education that were unforeseen even a few decades ago. You had the experience of this greater level of access, and you loved it even as some aspects of the emergency access didn't work for you.

During the last few months of the emergency access, we solicited feedback from you and found out what did and didn't work (see our [preliminary assessment](#)). We're now starting to build on what you told us, and what we learned.

What was abundantly clear is that you value digital access as an alternative to print access. In talking with you, we also discovered new use cases that could be enabled through digital access, such as needing short-term immediate access, wanting to convert text to audio files, and using only front-matter (e.g., tables of contents) from thousands of books.

Project LEND will explore ongoing digital access more deeply and seeks to identify and operationalize forms of digital access that will be the most transformative for research and education.

## Project scope and process

Project LEND is a two-year investigation spanning four research areas of interrelated topics:

- **User requirements** — directed by a faculty member at UC Irvine, we will use focus groups and other methods to understand the digital access needs of UC faculty and students for a range of research, education and clinical care scenarios.
- **Legal frameworks** — directed by a faculty member at the UC Berkeley School of Law, we will evaluate the legal frameworks under which libraries could provide expanded access to digitized books, including those still in copyright.
- **Technology requirements** — we will review and analyze existing technology platforms and systems for sharing and interacting with digital books, and explore the possibilities for creating new systems and services.

- **Collection scope** — we will determine the optimal composition of a digital book collection to meet user needs; what digitized collections are currently available or where more digitization efforts may be required; and how best to manage both print and digitized collections.

Project LEND is distinctive in that it begins with investigatory research (e.g., identifying what users ideally would want); this will be complemented by the legal, technological, and collection analyses and culminate in a service plan for implementation. The research is informed by existing models, including [controlled digital lending](#), a set of practices and technologies by which some libraries lend digital surrogates of their print materials. It also draws on UC’s experience with pandemic-era programs, such as [HathiTrust’s Emergency Temporary Access Service](#) (ETAS), which offered temporary access to digitized versions of in-copyright print books held by the user’s library. Because of HathiTrust’s work and understanding of the current digital library experience, the Project LEND team is coordinating closely with HathiTrust to lay the groundwork for a potential role in implementation.

The project seeks to enable services that would be broadly useful across higher education and beyond – not particular to UC. In addition to our collaboration with HathiTrust, we will also consult regularly with a Library Community Group (composed of varied academic libraries outside UC) to validate our assumptions and direction. Additionally, CoUL, the Academic Senate’s University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication (UCOLASC), and the UC Provost’s Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee (SLASIAC) will all receive regular project updates and have opportunities to provide feedback.

## Potential for research and education

Following UC’s usage of pandemic-era emergency access services, and the preliminary assessment of ETAS in particular, UC Libraries conducted an environmental scan to determine whether a large-scale investigation was indicated and to articulate both the value of and the plan for such an investigation if so. Between the preliminary assessment and the environmental scan, we found that expanded access to content is highly valued by faculty and students in myriad settings.

In all, we identified over 20 use cases that could be transformative for both research and education, including of course the use of entire digitized books (in lieu of print equivalents) but extending to a wide range of opportunities:

- I need the bibliographies from 10,000 books on my research topic...
- I want to download the chapter I need right now, not place an ILL request...
- I want to do my own data mining, rather than having to work through a mediated process...
- I want to convert this book chapter to an audio file so I can listen to it while I’m commuting home...
- I want to apply translation utilities other than Google Translate to this passage I found...
- I need access to this book for a few minutes – to see if it’s interesting, to check a citation, why does it matter?

- I need immediate access in order to respond to clinical care needs...
- I need to browse materials to assess reading level or performance level before assigning them for instruction...

## Copyright law and the role of libraries

Copyright law as it applies to libraries is a nuanced arena – balancing the rights of authors (and composers, editors, etc.) with the stated goal of copyright law to “promote the progress of science and useful arts.” The Founders established copyright in the United States as a seven-year protection. Under steady pressure from publishers and copyright holders over the last two centuries, copyright protections have been expanded multiple times so that books published today in the U.S. have copyright extended to 95 years – a historical anomaly — and increasingly scholars find themselves hobbled in pursuing academic tasks.

Libraries have for hundreds of years developed collections of books, journals, and other information resources and have made them available to users while respecting the intellectual property rights of authors. U.S. copyright law informs the uses libraries can make of the collections they own, and libraries often look to the [First-sale doctrine](#) and [Fair Use](#) to inform possible uses. A key part of the work of this research project is to study legal issues connected with digital access more closely so that libraries can be better positioned to make decisions about digital access to the works they own

Digitization efforts by libraries and collaboration via organizations like HathiTrust have empowered users tremendously, especially for full usage of millions of works in the public domain but also for certain use cases for works still in copyright. The successes of these collaborations are part of the inspiration for Project LEND, which seeks to devise solutions collaboratively at scale with scholars' interests in mind.

As both technology and technology-enabled research and education both advance, libraries have a duty to explore and confirm how best to continue their missions to support their communities of users and to take on these well-acknowledged frontiers.

## What does this mean for researchers, libraries, and UC right now?

Nothing is changing at the moment. Project LEND is a research project, albeit a critically important one.

## For more information

- Visit our [project website](#)
- Read the project report from our environmental scan
- Contact the project leadership at [projectlend@ucdavis.edu](mailto:projectlend@ucdavis.edu)