

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIANS CHARTER

This Charter specifies the principles and commitments established by and for the University of California (UC) Council of University Librarians (CoUL). As a self-organized council, CoUL members advance collaborative leadership and systemwide planning for the UC Libraries, and enable and guide innovative University-wide services, strategies and systems. The UC Libraries’ coalition comprises the ten campus libraries and California Digital Library (CDL).

CoUL operational guidelines are documented in a series of shared agreements that are available on [the UC Libraries website](#).

This Charter was endorsed by CoUL in principle in June 2023 and finalized in February 2024.

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1. BACKGROUND

Through more than 75 years of active partnership,¹ the UC Libraries have established and refined their hallmark traits: Collaborative problem-solving and decision making, resourcefulness and innovation. Together, the leadership and staff of the libraries deeply invest in collective action for local and systemwide benefit, and provide high-impact and widely utilized resources, services and infrastructure that directly advance the University's research, teaching, health care and public service missions.

Foundational documents include:

- The [*University of California Academic Plan: 1974 – 1978*](#), which highlighted the need for UC-wide collaboration to remain at the forefront of higher education and research, and emphasized the expansive collaborative potential of UC's libraries;
- The [*University of California Libraries: A Plan for Development \(1978 – 1988\)*](#) outlined strategies to further maximize the cost effectiveness and quality of library services and collections;
- The 1996 [*Library Planning and Action Advisory Task Force Report*](#) broadened strategic library collaboration and established the CDL to facilitate shared collection building, technology services and programs;
- The 2020 report, [*The UC Libraries: Collaborating for mission, leadership and efficiency*](#), lauded the libraries as a uniquely collaborative coalition that effectively advances UC as a global leader.

The UC Libraries continue to advance increasingly ambitious projects and services to secure shared efficiencies and influence, advance resource and service equity, and meet present and emerging challenges. Additional background is available on [the libraries' website](#).

2. PARTIES

The members of CoUL and parties to this Charter are the leadership (i.e., university librarian or executive director) of:

- i. UC Berkeley Library
- ii. UC Davis Library
- iii. UC Irvine Libraries
- iv. UCLA Library
- v. UC Merced Library
- vi. UC Office of the President California Digital Library
- vii. UC Riverside Library
- viii. UC San Diego Library
- ix. UC San Francisco Library
- x. UC Santa Barbara Library
- xi. UC Santa Cruz Library

3. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF WORK

CoUL is a self-organized council that advances the shared priorities and strategic actions of the UC Libraries in service of the University's core teaching, research and public good missions and the work and goals of UC faculty, students, clinicians, researchers, administrators and staff. The libraries actively pursue collaborative projects and services, together and with partners across the University and beyond

¹ [*UC President Sproul recognized the Library Council and shared library priorities in 1945, as detailed in the Report of the \[UC\] Libraries 1949 – 1957/58*](#); this is the earliest recorded iteration of CoUL.

UC (including non-profits, community organizations, peer institutions and funders). CoUL's work is strengthened and driven by UC's shared goals and values, including the [UC principles of community](#) and [UC commitment to advance diversity, equity and inclusion, systemwide](#).

Through shared work, services and infrastructure, CoUL aims to:

- A. Enrich and steward systemwide print, electronic and digital library collections in support of research and learning;
- B. Maximize discovery and enable the broadest possible access to scholarly resources;
- C. Further operational efficiency and systemwide impact;
- D. Sustain and strengthen trust, transparency, equity, inclusion and partnership amongst UC libraries employees and across UC libraries employees and all library stakeholders;
- E. Maintain and expand systemwide equitable access to library services, resources and infrastructure through a baseline of shared library offerings that elevate and advance UC teaching, research, health care and public service enterprises.

The UC Libraries mission, vision and annual priorities are further outlined on [the libraries' website](#).

4. SHARED PRINCIPLES

All parties to this CoUL Charter:

- A. Support, sustain and preserve the UC Libraries' collaborative, interdependent partnership;
- B. Value and uphold the agency and agility of CoUL and the UC Libraries to address shared challenges and opportunities;
- C. Advance [UC's values](#) throughout library governance and systemwide library work;
- D. Prioritize future-oriented strategy and service decisions that benefit the common good of the UC Libraries and University;
- E. Launch and sustain collaborative work at the most impactful levels, be it local, systemwide, regional, national or international partnerships, working within and outside the bounds of the libraries (e.g., with faculty, administrators, other service units, publishers, funders);
- F. Consider real costs, opportunity costs and future innovation opportunities when planning and strategizing systemwide library work;
- G. Empower UC libraries' employees to effectively carry out systemwide work;
- H. Uphold decision-making that embraces dialogue and differing opinions, while supporting collective action and agreement for decisions made;
- I. Actively communicate and share information with each other, within the UC Libraries Advisory Structure (UCLAS) and locally;
- J. Respect the autonomy and leadership of individual campus libraries and CDL; local obligations and needs may impact each leader/partner's ability to participate and contribute.

5. GOVERNANCE

CoUL is a representative body that is animated by the long-established collaborative ethos, ingenuity and shared commitments of UC's libraries. While each CoUL member reports to their local leadership, CoUL members are also accountable to one another and the University in their pursuit of systemwide library work. As a group, CoUL engages and consults with the UC Council of Vice Chancellors (COVC), UC provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, and UC vice provost for academic personnel and programs on critical systemwide challenges and opportunities.

To advance shared infrastructure, operations, services and core projects, the council established, holds administrative accountability for and sets the strategic priorities of UCLAS. CoUL empowers the library leaders and domain-specific teams within UCLAS to ensure decisions and work are carried out at the appropriate level(s) of governance. [Additional information about UCLAS can be found on the libraries' website.](#)

CoUL also benefits from regular engagement with the Librarians Association of the University of California (LAUC), which serves an important advisory role to CoUL and the University. CoUL further consults and partners with numerous systemwide committees, in particular the Academic Senate [University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication \(UCOLASC\)](#) and the UC provost-appointed [Systemwide Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee \(SLASIAC\)](#). The provost-charged [Systemwide Library Facilities Board](#) oversees strategic and operational oversight of the UC Systemwide Library Facilities and is closely connected to CoUL, with all council members serving on the board.

6. RESOURCE AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

The success of UC, including the University's capacity to further the work and aspirations of UC faculty, students, researchers, clinicians, administrators and staff, is dependent on the shared services, resources and infrastructure of the UC Libraries. To enable and ensure the longevity of UC Libraries' collaborative efforts, CoUL remains ready and willing to both maintain and strike new multi-year resource commitments and contractual agreements, both in support of shared services and project/pilot-based initiatives. By co-investing as a system, the libraries harness the full strength of the University in resource and product negotiations to seek the best terms and costs; shared processes and workflows can also be established and revised to advance innovation, gain operational efficiencies and improve end-user services.

Resource and financial commitments to systemwide work can include: In-kind FTE contributions from the campus libraries and CDL; one-time or ongoing funds; physical space; and systems and technical infrastructure. Cost share models for specific shared services, projects and contracts are established at CoUL's directive and based on shared principles established by CoUL and/or library experts. CoUL recognizes that local (i.e., campus and UCOP-based) budget processes and changes can impact systemwide commitments; council members have a shared responsibility to be transparent and forthright about projected and actual shortfalls, be it financial, staffing or otherwise.

To drive innovation, the libraries pursue tools, services and investments both individually and collectively. By encouraging individual library innovation alongside collective innovation and co-investments, CoUL embodies the principles that underpin the UC system.

7. TERM OF AGREEMENT & AMENDMENTS

Written and endorsed in 2023 and 2024 to document CoUL's existing agreements and responsibilities, this Charter will continue in effect indefinitely, unless amended or terminated unanimously by the eleven council members. The provisions and details of this Charter will be evaluated and, as necessary, amended by the council. A decision to amend this Charter must be finalized at least six-months prior to implementation. CoUL will engage and consult on proposed revisions to the Charter, as needed with applicable groups.

Approved: Council of University Librarians, February 20, 2024