

# The Library In Crisis

## Preface

In February 2008, some librarians approached the Chair of the Senate, suggesting that there were major long-term problems with the library's funding. Subsequently, On March 24, 2008, the Davis Division of the Academic Senate requested that we form the special U.C. Davis Library Task Force, charged with investigating issues raised about the budget and operations of Shields Library. Specifically, we were asked to review how these issues impact the library collections and services. During our investigation we have met with librarians providing those services, as well as the library administrators. We want to thank the librarians for alerting us to the budgetary problem, the library administrators for providing us with the data that appears in this report, and Bryan Rodman for his able assistance.

It is clear to us that the Library is at a critical juncture in its evolution. The library's problems are not new, but are now at the point where they threaten the ability of the library to serve its primary research function. We hope that the observations contained in this report together with our recommendations can offset this ongoing decline, and help restore the library to the ranking it deserves.

Submitted July 22, 2008,

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## Introduction

The use of computers in the retrieval, archiving and dissemination of information can be thought of as the second major transformation faced by libraries and the universities that have grown up around them, the advent of printing being the first. In this longer view of the relationship between libraries and their universities, the computer revolution has just begun and many of the difficulties of our own university library reflect this ongoing change.

The explosion of information and proliferation of disciplines, combined with the demand that more information be available more quickly, has put libraries in the unenviable position of having to accelerate services just to stay functional. On a campus as diverse as U.C. Davis, the sheer number of departments, centers, majors and graduate groups ensures that library resources will be pulled in many different directions. At the same time, the library has faced a long term environment of static budget allocations leading to difficult choices between different information delivery service components. Indeed, it is a testament to hard work by many individuals in difficult times that, for some patrons, the services the library provides to them have become nearly invisible. As expectations have risen, it may be that gratitude has diminished---faculty and students click on icons to instantaneously receive electronic versions of latest research articles (often before a print copy exists) failing to recognize that this is a service provided by our library.

The faculty of a university should be concerned with the health of their library for the wellbeing of their students and their own research programs. There is a collective interest in seeing that this central component of the University infrastructure has the resources it needs to provide the services expected of it. The library is a facility that we all show to prospective faculty and students, it should be a common focal point of pride in our University.

Unfortunately, we feel that despite utilizing efficiencies afforded by new technologies, poor funding leaves the library in crisis. This is not simply a subjective judgment but one borne out by the University Library's ranking by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). Since the early 1990s, all the other libraries in the UC system have maintained or improved their status, while U.C. Davis's library has suffered a drastic decline. Of course achieving high rankings should not be an objective in itself. As this report will show, our library's decline in ranking reflects the decline in its ability to serve our campus.

In the following sections, we examine the declines in: the library's budget; its ability to serve our diverse campus; its ability to provide specialized services such as Government Information and Maps, and electronic databases; and in its consultation with faculty.

## Budgetary Decline

The General Library budget has been static for the last fifteen years in nominal dollar terms. In effect, this represents a decline in library funding with serious consequences for research and learning. The situation can be understood from the three graphs on the next page. The first depicts the General Library Budget varying from \$15.9M to \$16.3M between 1998 and 2008---this graph is best approximated by a horizontal line. Of course, expenditures alone are not a measure of the quality of a library, a more accurate gauge is the Association of Research Libraries<sup>1</sup> index depicted in the second graph. Shown there, are the rankings of University of California libraries—between 1993 and 2001 Davis ranks consistently between 35th and 38th place nationwide. However, since 2001 the Library ranking has dropped steadily to its current 60th place. For comparison, in the 1980s the U.C. Davis library was ranked among the top twenty-five libraries nationwide.

As library funds tighten, collections can only be maintained at the price of reductions in staffing. This can be seen in lower numbers of FTE librarians and staff and attempts to remedy the situation by employing more students. The effects of these changes are studied later in this report, but the accompanying numbers are tabulated below:

Year	FTE Librarians	FTE Staff	FTE Students	Total FTE
1991-92	76	204	64	344
2002-03	61	170	66	297
2003-04	61	157	64	282
2004-05	62	150	57	269
2005-06	65	154	54	273
2006-07	59	144	70	273

Many faculty may feel some surprise confronted with these figures. One might have thought that as scholarly communications become increasingly electronic (many researchers no longer even need to leave their offices to access quality journals), library costs would decrease. This is plainly false: the excellent access to electronic journals at the University of California is only possible through library subscriptions to the California Digital Library. The third graph plots this cost and its rapid increase from \$0.3M annually in 1998 to \$3.7M today. It is easy to argue that this is money well spent; system-wide bargaining power affords a much better deal for the journal resources crucial

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<sup>1</sup> Like all the fields they serve, research libraries have a professional organization that assesses their activities. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is “a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries at comprehensive, research-extensive institutions in the US and Canada that share similar research missions, aspirations, and achievements.” The U.C. Davis library is a member of this organization as are six other libraries on U.C. campuses.

to current modes of scholarly communication. Conversely, it is also easy to argue that this heavy financial burden impacts negatively all other library operations.

The funding for the library has in no way kept pace with the meteoric rise in extramural research grants. For example total research funds raised for 1998 and 2008 and were \$183.1M and \$456.8M, respectively. In the same time period, despite its central role supporting this research, and despite the creation of some twenty new academic programs, the General Library has received essentially no additional funding.

As this section has shown, there has been chronic underfunding of the General Library over a considerable period of time. The difficulties faced by the General Library do not appear to be a product of the *current* campus budgetary woes. The deleterious effects, already anticipated in the plummeting ARL rankings, of this budgetary neglect are investigated further in the remainder of this report. They are felt particularly acutely in a University as diverse as Davis.

## **A Library for a Diverse Campus**

As the University Librarian stated to the Task Force, the number and range of disciplines at U.C. Davis are much larger than those at any other U.C. campus and probably than those at almost every other university campus in the nation. Our Library therefore has to serve a truly extraordinary range and number of disciplines, and serve them all at the level appropriate to a research university. Therefore, the proportion of this campus's expenditures devoted to the Library should be larger than that of other U.C. campuses, and of almost all other non-U.C. campuses.

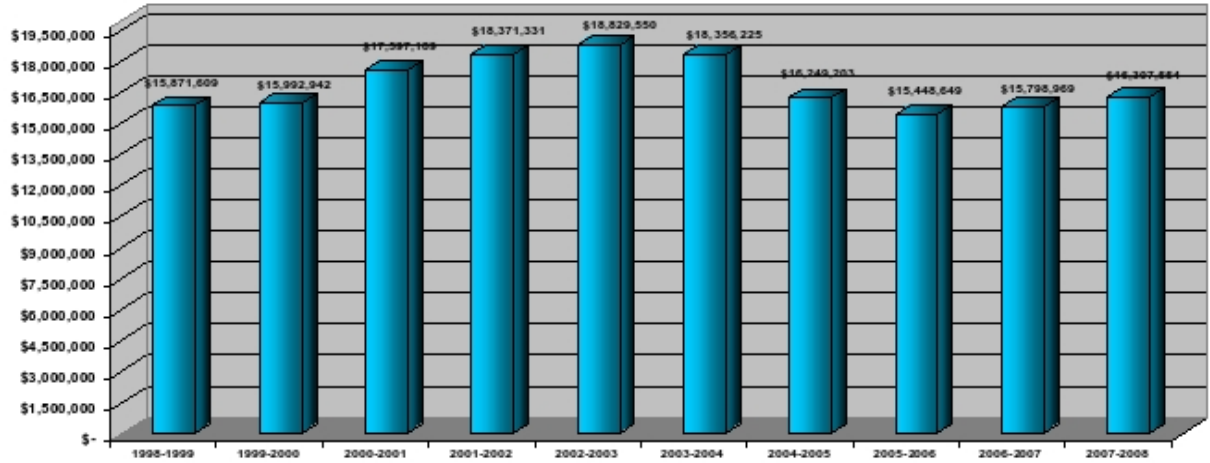
Instead, that proportion is smaller. Indeed, not only is the proportion smaller, but the actual sums budgeted to the Library on this diverse campus are smaller than those at other comparable, but less diverse, U.C. campuses. The consequences can be shown by comparison of U.C. Davis Library's current status to those of U.C. San Diego and U.C. Irvine.<sup>2</sup> We note that, in 2006, Library expenditures on this campus constituted only 1.14% of campus expenditures; in contrast, at U.C.I. they constituted 1.41% and at U.C. San Diego 1.21% of campus expenditures.<sup>3</sup> The difference between the proportion of

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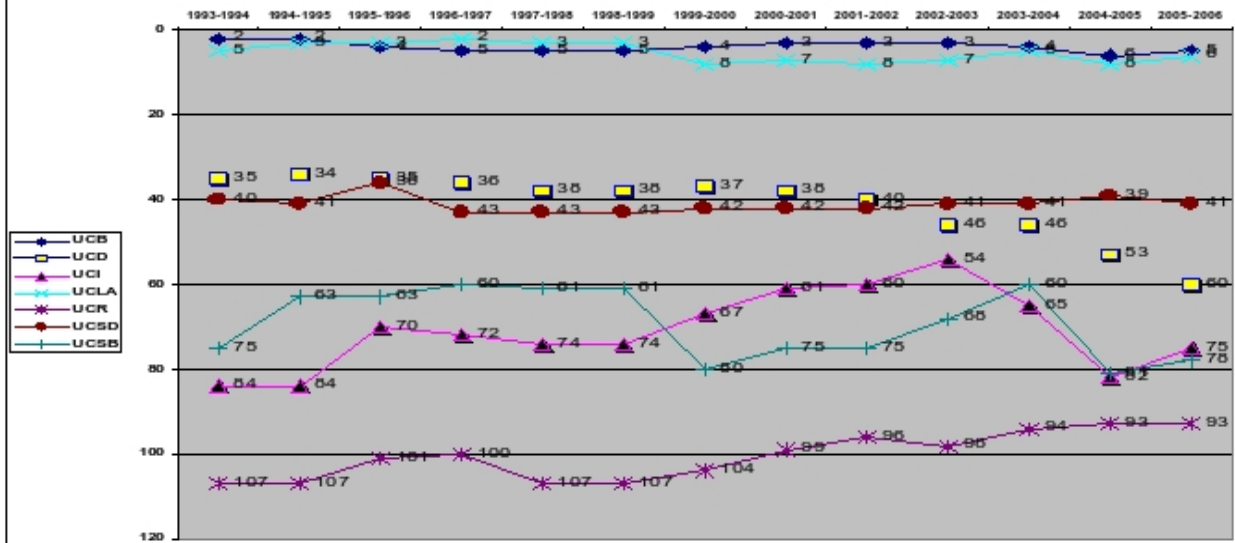
2 These are the Libraries to which our Library is "most often compared" according to the University Librarian [Sharrow to Sadler, Mar. 18, 2008], even though our Library considerably outranked both Libraries in the 1980s. When asked for information comparing our Library to others within the UC system, the Library Administration gave us more information about those two Libraries than about the other Libraries.

3 The total campus budget in these calculations excludes the budget for the Medical Center at each of U.C. Davis, U.C. San Diego, and UCI.

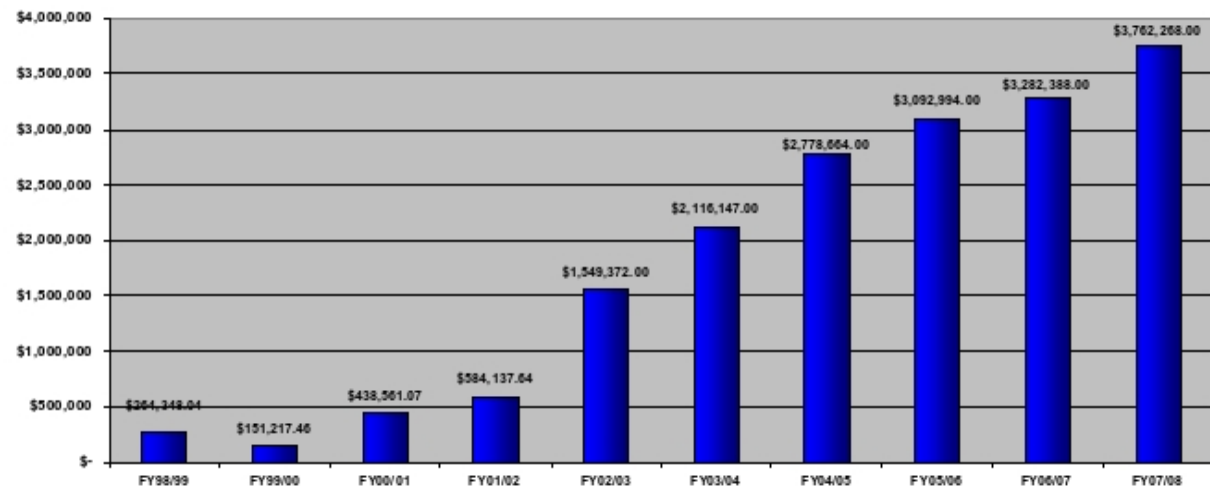
### General Library 1990 Budget Allocation



### Association of Research Libraries Rankings



### UCD General Library CDL Licensed Resources Expenditures (\$18,020,097 over 10 years)



funds spent on the Library at these campuses may seem small. However, campus budgets are so big, and the relative amounts devoted to the Library so small, that a small difference in the proportion of funds spent on the Library makes an enormous difference in a Librarian's ability to maintain and develop the Library. In 2006, U.C. Irvine's Library budget was 113% of the U.C. Davis Library budget, and its ranking in 2006 was more than 10% higher than its ranking in 1993. U.C. San Diego's performance is equally revelatory. In 2006, its Library budget was 141% of the U.C. Davis Library budget, and U.C. San Diego has been able to maintain its Library's ranking -- and maintain it at a level about only 15% lower than that of U.C. Davis's Library in 1993 -- throughout the period from 1993 to the present. In contrast, U.C. Davis's Library, which outranked U.C. San Diego's in 1993, is now outranked by U.C. San Diego's and in 2006 ranked almost 45% lower than its rank in 1993. These comparisons -- which should show that U.C. Davis spends more on its Library than do other campuses, and instead show that it spends less -- suggest that the Library is not getting support sufficient to serve the diverse needs of the campus.

The same pattern appears when we compare Library expenditure to enrollment. Table 1 (again based on information supplied by the Library Administration) presents that comparison.

**Table 1**

<b>Library</b>	<b>Library Expenditure per full-time enrollee</b>
U.C. Davis	\$630
U.C. Irvine	\$692
U.C. San Diego	\$966
U. Michigan, Ann Arbor	\$1,250
U.N.C, Chapel Hill	\$1,339
Cornell University	\$2,150

As a result of this lack of funding, the U.C. Davis Library is no longer serving the diverse needs of this campus.

## **Disciplinary Perspectives:**

This report assesses the Library's service to the campus's diverse disciplines by examining its service to: a natural science discipline, Enology, which makes this campus unique; Mathematics, a central scientific discipline; and book-oriented disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, such as History, essential to U.C. Davis's identity as a general campus of the University of California.

### **Enology:**

One of U.C. Davis's distinguishing features is its attention to viticulture and enology. Therefore, it is highly appropriate that our Library boasts a Level V collection on the subject -- that is, a collection which researchers come to this campus to use. Lack of funding means that items in the collection cannot be catalogued and so made available. As some items in the collection are unique -- genuinely one-of-a-kind, lack of funding is therefore impeding research not just at this campus but throughout the world.

### **Mathematics:**

Mathematicians rely heavily on preprints disseminated through the arXiv repository (see <http://lanl.arxiv.org/>) for latest results and on traditional journals for older articles, the best of which are now available on-line through the University's California Digital Library subscription. (The main role played by journals handling newer articles is the management of peer review.) They also make extensive use of book resources of which the library has a fair collection, although quite often interlibrary loans are necessary. As a measure of the financial strain the library finds itself under, last month the Mathematics Department's library representative (along with those of the other Physical Science and Engineering Departments) was contacted by the Physical Sciences and Engineering Librarian to identify—in the context of budget shortfalls---to identify which databases and journals were critical to their research and teaching. For many faculty this possibly came as a shock but quite quickly a list covering essentially nearly every mathematics journal of any standing was generated. This experience underscores both the disconnect between (unknowing!) library users and the library itself, as well as the importance of these resources to research faculty.

### **History:**

Lack of funding is making it difficult for scholars in book-oriented disciplines to keep pace with scholars at other research universities. Scholars in these disciplines find that they are increasingly unable to do their research in a timely manner because the Library is increasingly unable to buy books. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the Library is even ceasing to acquire standard reference works -- that is, works to which one routinely refers graduate students, and are the foundation for research. For example, U.C. Davis's Library does not have *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge, 2006). The scholar can get this book, after waiting a week, through Interlibrary Loan; and then she has to wait a week for the major works to which it refers

her; and then another week for each of the less major but well regarded works to which they lead her. Such reliance on Interlibrary Loan at the beginning of a research project means that a scholar loses time and momentum as she sits and waits for works absolutely essential to her project.

The task force has received some clear quantitative evidence of this lack of funding. One of the Library's subject specialists, who serves departments in both the Social Sciences and the Humanities, stated that this year he<sup>4</sup> had just 39% of the discretionary funds for buying books that he had six years ago. Six years ago, those discretionary funds constituted 52% of the funds spent on books for the subjects he served. As this specialist bought for 4 subjects six years ago and now buys for 10, crude arithmetical calculation suggests that the discretionary funds available for buying books for each of those subjects this year was about one-sixth of what was available 6 years ago. In at least some Departments, introduction to the Library, either by tour or by virtual tour through the electronic catalogue, is part of the recruiting process. U.C. Davis's Library is no longer an aid and may well be becoming an impediment to both recruitment and retention.

## **Consultation between the Library and the Faculty**

This task force owes its existence to a representation made by line librarians (i.e., librarians not in the Library Administration) to the chair of the Senate. This, in itself, speaks volumes about the lack of consultation between the Library and the faculty. While some faculty were aware that the Library was no longer serving their individual needs, neither they nor, especially, the faculty Library Committees had any idea of the extent of the Library's decline. Why?

There is plenty of blame to go round. First: the faculty. It is evident that the faculty Library Committees are either moribund or barely functional. Some colleges no longer have Library Committees. Even when colleges do have a Library Committee, it may never meet. As for the Senate Library committee, it meets very infrequently with a very small attendance.

But then, there is the question: even if the college committees had met, and their representatives attended, would anything have been done? First, again there is the problem faculty have created for themselves. The Library Committee has no obvious way of exerting influence on the Senate's activity. Its chair does not serve on, and seems to have little relation to, the Executive Committee.

Second, however, is the problem associated with the Library's communication to faculty committees. Most important is the Library's lack of communication about its budget. While Library committees are told whether the projected budget for the coming year will increase or decrease the Library's funds, the committees are not told: how the projected budget compares to any budget other than that of the current year (thus making it

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4 For convenience, the specialist is referred to as "he". However, the reader should be aware that the Task Force wishes to preserve the anonymity of its informants. Therefore, this report may obscure references which might be taken to identify the Task Force's informants.

impossible for the committees to discern long-term trends); how the current budget affects the various areas which the Library serves (and such information was given to the college Library committees in the days of the University Librarian's predecessor); and what the long-term trend of funding for the various areas is. Without such budgetary information, the Library Committees work in the dark, and are therefore powerless. The Library Administration's failure to provide the Library Committee with the budgetary information they need to do their work is the counterpart, at the committee level, of the Administration's withdrawal from shared governance.

As the circumstances which gave rise to this report indicate, the campus needs not just more money for the Library, but also new structures to insure that shared governance applies to the Library as well as to the campus as a whole.

## **Case Study: Government Information and Maps**

A good case study of the challenges faced by the Library, along with the lack of input from faculty, comes from the recent reorganization of the Government Information and Maps department. The Shields Library website

<http://www.lib.U.C.Davisavis.edu/dept/govinfo/>

describes this department as:

The Government Information and Maps Department is located on the Lower Level of Shields Library. The department acquires, processes and makes available government information and maps in all formats. Our government information and map collections are extensive .... Regardless of format or location, the Government Information & Maps Reference desk is a great place to start for historical, specialized or electronic government and mapping information.

This department is absolutely crucial for faculty and student research. However, there were no meetings publicized to faculty to inform them of this reorganization, so the reorganization of this department was done without faculty consultation. That lack of faculty input about a major reorganization is a problem in itself. But the greatest problem with the reorganization is that it focuses on shifting personnel around departments, without considering the critical research functions played by the Government Information department. For example, one function is to provide easy access to reference materials, which will be made more difficult by this reorganization.

Our understanding is that the reorganization of department is effective July 1, 2008. At that time, four key librarians who have been present in the Government Information and Maps department will be relocated to other departments: Juri Stratford, who has had primary responsibility for international information, will move to the Humanities/Social Sciences department on the 2nd floor; Marcia Meister, who has had primary responsibility for Federal information, will also move to the Humanities/Social Sciences

department on the 2nd floor; Kathy Stroud, who has had primary responsibility for maps and geographical information systems (GIS), will move to the Biology/Agriculture on the 3rd floor; and Patsy Inouye, who has had primary responsibility for State information, will move to Special collections and the California History and Photography collection.

This reorganization of staff raises numerous concerns to the faculty and these concerns have not been adequately addressed. First, where will the reference material be located? Our understanding is the government information reference materials will be moved to Humanities/Social Sciences. Likewise, the responsibility for collection development in each specialized area will remain with the librarians who are moving. But not all materials can be moved: the microform (fiche and film) will remain in the basement, along with maps. Clearly, questions that arise with respect to these materials cannot be easily answered when the librarians with primary responsibility for them are located elsewhere in the library.

For example, the microform collection in Shields library includes an important set of technical reports, written under contract to the U.S. government. These reports were not distributed under the federal depository program, but were acquired over many years by the selection of Shields librarians, and the indexes used to catalogue these materials have changed over time. The librarians previously located in Government Information and Maps have specialized knowledge that enable them to navigate these materials. In the absence of these librarian from that department, a user who is interested in, say, potential bridge fatigue in California, will find it extremely difficult to locate such technical reports in the microform collection. That problem would be compounded if the user also wanted GIS information, such as on seismic faults, since the librarian with the greatest knowledge of those resources will not be located in the lower-level department.

This example raises the second concern with the reorganization: who will be available for consultation in the Government Information and Maps division? With the four key personnel moved elsewhere, the best source of knowledge will be gone, leaving students or other less-experienced personnel for consultation. It will no longer be the case that, in the words of the library website: "Regardless of format or location, the Government Information & Maps Reference desk is a great place to start for historical, specialized or electronic government and mapping information."

## Electronic Databases

We conclude our report by highlighting a new expense associated with the revolution in electronic technology: electronic databases of printed works. These databases make what has been printed through the ages -- in both books and newspapers -- digitally searchable, and they also categorize these works, so that scholars do not drown in seas of misleading references. As a result, scholars can now find in a few minutes information they might otherwise have taken years to identify and retrieve. Such databases have just become available in the last six or so years, and it is clear that scholars with access to such databases will set the standard for research in their fields. Scholars without such access do not have a chance.

Obtaining access to such databases is therefore of major importance, and will only become more important. Moreover, access to these databases introduces a new type of problem for the Library's service mission. U.C. Davis's Library does not have, and has no plans to get, many of the databases now available elsewhere, including at other UC campuses. For example, this campus does not have "The Making of Modern Law", a database of about 100,000 legal works written between 1800 and 1925, and a database which is available at some other UC campuses. If these databases were books, then the Library could borrow them on Interlibrary Loan. However, Libraries are not allowed to lend databases. A scholar has to travel to a campus that has a database in order to use it, and even then may not be able to use it if the database's license restricts its use to members of the campus. How, then, are U.C. Davis's scholars to get access to the databases which will increasingly be extraordinarily fundamental to their research?

## Recommendations

### (I) INCREASE FUNDING

The Library's budget should keep pace with its counterparts at other UC campuses and throughout the nation. We therefore urge the administration to undertake action to bring our library back to its ranking in the top 30 research libraries. Furthermore, when new programs are created, the library must actually receive the funding necessary to serve them properly; this has not happened in the past. Clearly, this means a large infusion of funds.

### (II) REINVIGORATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY COMMITTEE

1. The chair of the Library Committee should either: (a) be on the Executive Committee; or (b) attend the Executive Committee at least twice a year -- the first time to inform the Exec Committee of difficulties which the Library Committee anticipates; and the second time to inform the Exec Committee whether anything has been done to assuage the Library Committee's concerns. The Library should, therefore, be an action item on at least two of the Executive Committee's agenda.

2. (a) *Meetings.* This Committee is of sufficient importance that it should be meeting more than once a year. At the least, it should have an opening meeting at which members can voice their concerns, and a later meeting at which these members can be informed of how their concerns are being addressed.

(b) *Business.* A major proportion of the business of the Library Committee should be inspection of both the budget, and of the ranking of the Library. This should include a comparison of the ranking of our Library to that of other UC libraries. Inspection of the budget and of ranking should include the relation of each to that in each of the past five years, and then to that of every fifth year of the past six to twenty years. The committee should also be provided with the materials presented to each "disciplinary group" committee, and with a table showing the proportion of the budget devoted to materials for each "disciplinary group", and comparing those proportions to that in each of the past five years, and to that in every fifth year of the past six to twenty years.

The Library should also inform both the chair of the committee and the chairs of the disciplinary committees of major anticipated changes in the Library (changes such as the dismemberment of Government Documents), so that these chairs can decide whether to call meetings to consider such changes.

The chair of the Senate Library Committee shall call a meeting of the Committee whenever a chair of a "disciplinary group" committee requests that meeting.

3. The college library committees should be officially declared defunct, and new committees created.

(a) *Composition.* In order to insure that these committees share common concerns, they should be structured around groups of like-minded disciplines. This task force suggests

that there be a committee for each of: Physical Sciences and Mathematics (including Engineering); Biological and Health Sciences; Social Sciences (including the School of Management); and Humanities. Each Department's Library Representative is a member of the appropriate committee. The Committee on Committees will nominate a chair for each of these "Disciplinary Group" Committees. (The chair may but need not be a Library Representative.)

(b) *Meetings.* Because these Committees will have a very large number of members, it is highly unlikely that all or even most of their members could attend any one meeting. Therefore, the chairs of these Committees should be instructed that any meeting should be a "double meeting" -- that is, any meeting will be held on both of two dates, so that members who cannot attend one meeting will have a good chance of being able to attend the other.

(c) *Committee business.* Each committee should be provided with: the current budget as it affects their area, a budget further subdivided so that the committee can see the proportion of the budget devoted to books, journals, databases, and, if relevant, other materials, Each committee should also be provided with this information as it affects their area for: each of the past five years; and then for every fifth year of the past six to twenty years. This task force requested that the Library provide it with such information, but did not receive that information. Nonetheless, this task force believes that it should not be difficult to provide that information as, for example, it is probably available in summaries of the Library's budget.

The committee meeting will also provide the occasion on which each discipline can report about the extent to which the Library is serving its needs.

(d) *Committee representation.* The chair of each committee should sit on the campus Library Committee, taking the place of the chairs of the now defunct college Library Committees.

### **(III) SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION**

The Library Committee's charge includes discussion of all issues affecting the library. In addition to budgetary issues and decisions affecting library services, this also includes broader issues such as scholarly communication. The technological revolution in libraries has transformed scholarly communication into a significant and contentious issue. In some fields, publication is now dominated by journals which charge increasingly outrageous prices for access to their content. Indeed, these charges are now so high that they have significantly limited the Library's purchasing power. The campus and academia as a whole face the challenge of aiding academics in fields now being exploited by commercial electronic publishers to take more control of that publication without: (i) censoring scholarship; or (ii) impeding publication by academics in other fields in the relatively inexpensive forms of publication that characterize those fields. Successful resolution of this problem will rest upon extended discussion among the academy's disciplines, discussion which recognizes the needs and concept of publication in each field. At U.C. Davis, such discussion should take place in the Library Committee.