



UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS LIBRARIES  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

*Office of the Vice Provost • P.O. Box P • Austin, TX 78713-8916 • (512) 495-4350 • FAX (512) 495-4347*

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Maurie McInnis  
Executive Vice President and Provost  
The University of Texas at Austin  
110 Inner Campus Dr. STOP G1000  
Austin, Texas 78712-1701

Dear Provost McInnis,

I write with regard to the ongoing campus discussion about the UT Libraries collection currently housed in the Fine Arts Library. We have heard from many concerned students, faculty, staff and alumni, and I appreciate this is a discussion that many on this campus care about deeply.

First, I want to thank you for agreeing to fund my recent request to significantly reduce the retrieval times for volumes located off campus. Based on feedback I have received, this will help address some concerns expressed by our faculty and students.

Below I would like to clarify a few facts around the Fine Arts Library discussion.

- No UT library materials sent to storage at Joint Library Facility (JLF) are ever destroyed.
- All UT Library materials sent to JLF in College Station for storage continue to be owned by UT Austin.
- A decision to send library materials to remote storage is a decision to invest in the long-term preservation of these materials for the University's research and teaching needs while retaining perpetual access to all materials as they are needed by researchers.

The transformation of library spaces to meet evolving needs of patrons and the requirements of ever-expanding collections are not new challenges for libraries. Over the past several decades, library professionals have developed numerous tested and reliable strategies to manage the myriad expectations of library users and the burgeoning need for storage space. Harvard University, renowned for its extensive library collection, has been a national leader in this effort.

UT Libraries welcomes the chance to discuss opportunities and challenges with all of our stakeholders and we seek to include them in the decision-making processes as transitions in libraries occur. We can begin by discussing two major aspects of our work – collection curation and collection preservation.

### **How do we make decisions about what goes into storage?**

- A core duty of professional librarians assigned to collections is to maintain a highly curated collection to support teaching and research. Collections are curated both in terms of what to add and what to move to storage. We expect our liaison librarians to maintain a strong relationship with the faculty they support and to regularly consult with faculty about collections acquisitions and curation.
- Items sent to storage typically include books and other materials that have not circulated for years, materials that have been superseded by newer publications, and materials that no longer align well with research priorities. Decisions are made based on input gathered from faculty in various ways and on available data about the use of the collections.
- The lack of space for collection growth has been a key driver of these strategies to store materials off-site. Given that we have not seen a net increase in library space on campus since 1979, a time span that has seen the addition of 6 million volumes to our collection, we have been systematically selecting materials for storage from across the collection – including Fine Arts – for several decades.

### **What are our facilities for storage and what volumes go where?**

- The University has invested in preservation quality library storage facilities (LSF) on the Pickle campus and a shared facility in College Station – the Joint Library Facility (JLF) – funded by both the UT System and the Texas A&M System. This investment and future plans for expansion at the Pickle campus are detailed in the recently completed Campus Collections Master Plan.
- More than 2 million items are currently housed in our Pickle storage facilities and may be requested at any time for use on campus.
  - Over the past five years, the highest annual retrieval rate from LSF has been 0.7% of the total volumes stored.
  - Previously, the average time for retrieval and delivery was 2-3 working days. With the new funding commitment from the Provost's Office, this will be significantly reduced to one working day in most cases. Because we do not staff the storage facilities on weekends and rely on UT's mainframe computing for retrieval notifications, items requested Fri-Sun will take longer, but not more than 2-3 calendar days.
- The JLF in College Station was established to house resources contributed by universities across both UT and TAMU systems, and serves as a central library where

these materials may be claimed as Resource-in-Common (RIC) and then requested for use by any institution. Contrary to information being disseminated on campus:

- All University of Texas materials sent to the JLF continue to be owned by the University of Texas. TAMU operates the facility but does not own the materials (unless they originate in TAMU library collections).
- Because materials housed in JLF may be used by other member institutions, in cases where materials are already in use by another researcher, our interlibrary loan services (ILS) will locate the most immediately available volume elsewhere. This situation can cause delays in retrieval and delivery, as it does with any other library item that is checked out when requested.
- We share campus concerns about the delivery times described above, both from LSF and from JLF. We will continue working with University administration to augment our retrieval and delivery resources in order to decrease the wait times in the near future.

### **How does the UT Libraries work with the campus community to improve outcomes?**

- UT Libraries works in partnership with college deans and university administrators and maintains a continuous feedback loop with students and faculty to support efforts that leverage our collective resources to realize new possibilities the entire UT Austin campus. Recent examples include:
  - Student-driven transformation: based on direct requests UT Student Government and feedback from student users, the Libraries instituted 24-hour service at PCL, improved infrastructure support for personal technologies and redesigned the Libraries website.
  - LLILAS Benson: working with faculty and researchers in Latin American studies, the Libraries developed a unique partnership with the College of Liberal Arts to integrate teaching, learning and research with the rich distinctive collections of the Benson Latin American Collection.
  - PCL Learning Commons: a partnership with the College of Liberal Arts that saw the integration of the University Writing Center into PCL, providing students with seamless access to research and writing assistance in modern state of the art facilities.
  - PCL STEM Study Spaces: a partnership with the College of Natural Sciences, the School of Engineering and the Provost's Office that created a suite of STEM Learning Spaces that can be reserved for tutoring in specific STEM classes. When they are not booked, they are open for individual or collaborative study by any student.

- McKinney Engineering Library: a collaboration with the School of Engineering that resulted in a completely revamped and modernized engineering Library in the recently opened Engineering Education and Research Center.
- Fine Arts Library: the Fine Arts Library task force purposefully designated multiple allocations for student and faculty members to insure that all viewpoints are reflected in the recommendations of the committee.

Collaborative projects by their nature require compromises among the partners. Working with our colleagues in colleges and the administration, UT libraries provides data, analysis and professional advice with regard to decisions about library locations. In all instances, we provide the most effective and responsible stewardship of library collections, optimized relative to the resources made available by the university.

I hope that you find this information helpful. Again, thank you for your support and additional funds as we work to respond to the concerns that have been raised.

I am also providing copies of this letter to President Fennes as well as the Dean of Fine Arts, the Chair of the Faculty Council, and the Chair of the University Libraries Committee (C7) in the hope that we will see a return to collegial, fact-based dialogue about these issues.

Respectfully yours,



Lorraine J Haricombe  
Vice Provost and Director

LJH/deb

cc: Greg Fennes  
Doug Dempster  
Steven Hoelscher  
George Bittner