E-Books in Academic Libraries

Ward, Suzanne M, Freeman, Robert S, Nixon, Judith M

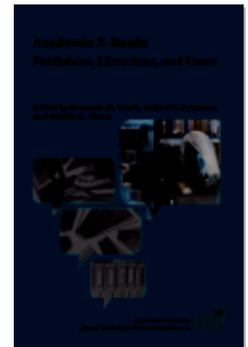Published by Purdue University Press

➡ For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/43208

6 | University of California, Merced: Primarily an Electronic Library

Jim Dooley

ABSTRACT

The University of California, Merced (UC Merced) opened September 5, 2005, as the tenth campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. Collections planning began in 2003. While the intention has never been to create an all-electronic library, the current collection is over 90% electronic. Almost all serials are electronic. Librarians use demand-driven acquisitions (DDA) plans extensively to provide access to e-books. There are no traditional librarian bibliographers or selectors. This chapter describes the decisions made at the beginning, evaluates the results after 10 years of operation, and looks forward to developments in the next 10 years.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from print to electronic format for information resources has been underway for some time and at varying speeds, depending on individual library environments. Even with extensive print collections developed over many years, research university libraries often have been leaders in this transition. Factors such as pressure to reuse space, changes in scholarly communication, the increasing importance of born-digital resources, the documented decline in the use of print materials, and growing preferences (albeit varying by discipline) of faculty and students for information in electronic form have all combined to cause research libraries increasingly to favor the acquisition of information resources in electronic format. Along

with changes in collection development practices, many research university libraries also are reexamining traditional methods of providing library services to faculty and students. One question is how far can a research university library go in this direction? By itself, the history of the University of California, Merced Library does not answer this question, but it may point to an answer.

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED

The University of California (UC) is the public research university of California, distinct from the California State University system that focuses on undergraduate instruction. Currently, the university consists of nine general campuses enrolling both undergraduate and graduate students and one campus, the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), which enrolls only graduate and professional students in medicine and health sciences.

The University of California, Merced (UC Merced) opened on September 5, 2005, as the tenth campus in the University of California system and the first American research university to open in the 21st century. As of August 2014, UC Merced has almost 6,400 students, of whom nearly 400 are graduate students. The current plan is that by 2020 there will be 10,000 students, including 1,000 graduate students. For a detailed account of the founding of UC Merced, consult Merritt and Lawrence's (2007) book, *From Rangeland to Research University: The Birth of the University of California, Merced*.

INITIAL COLLECTION PLANNING

Planning the library's collection began in 2003, two years before the campus opened. At this time, the university librarian and the head of collection services developed some basic collection development principles that have remained intact during the past decade. Library collection management policies favored a just-in-time approach to collection building rather than the traditional just-in-case approach. Materials would primarily be acquired to meet a specific information need rather than to build a collection for future use. Every effort would be made to leverage the collections and services available through the University of California libraries. In this context, access would be much more important than ownership. Books and journals would be acquired prospectively; interlibrary loan (ILL) would be relied upon for access to retrospective materials. Librarians would buy

some older books in response to high levels of local use. The librarians believed that the number and scope of information resources available in electronic form would continue to increase over time. While the library would attempt to acquire a needed resource in any appropriate format, information resources in electronic form would be preferred. Although not directly related to these policies, librarians also decided not to acquire microforms, although they purchased microform reader/printers in case microforms were received through ILL. Additionally, the library would not collect textbooks; students would be expected to buy their own copies of required textbooks.

Although not directly related to collections, two additional policy decisions were made very early in planning for the operation of the library. First, librarians would not sit at a public reference desk. The library services desk would be staffed by students who would refer users to a librarian for individual reference consultation. Second, and related to the policy not to acquire textbooks, the library would not maintain a reserve operation. Librarians would assist faculty in placing links to electronic resources in the course management system, and, at faculty request, designate specific print books as "Library Use Only" for a semester.

The librarians needed to make some intelligent guesses about what the academic programs would look like in the next two to five years. The initial academic vision, which has remained largely intact to the present time, was that research and teaching would be highly interdisciplinary. To foster interdisciplinary work, the primary academic organizational units would be schools, rather than traditional discipline-based departments. Initially, there were three schools: Engineering; Natural Sciences; and Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts; plus a Graduate Division. While the original intention was that all three schools would develop at the same pace, it became apparent during 2003 and 2004 that the Engineering School and Natural Sciences School were developing at a faster pace than Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts. As a result, the library needed to plan for an initial collection to support primarily engineering, life sciences, and physical sciences. Given the realities of scholarly communication in these disciplines, librarians would therefore need to focus on the acquisition of electronic resources, which at UC Merced largely meant gaining access to appropriate electronic resources already available through the University of California.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARIES

To understand collection development policies at UC Merced, it is first necessary to understand the position of the UC Merced Library within the University of California system of libraries. Considered as a whole, the UC libraries constitute the largest research university library in the world with over 39 million print volumes and 3.7 million digitized volumes. In 2013–2014, the 100 libraries that make up the UC system had a total budget of $237,000,000. The California Digital Library (CDL), which despite its name is an office of the University of California, provides a variety of central services to the campus libraries. These include negotiating and licensing electronic resources, managing the union catalog (Melvyl) using the OCLC WorldCat Local platform, managing an internal ILL system and courier service that exchanged 102,000 items between UC campuses in 2012–2013, and developing and managing a variety of data management and digital library services. The CDL also manages the UC Shared Cataloging Program (SCP) located at UC San Diego, which provides MARC records to the campus libraries for centrally licensed electronic information resources as well as acquisitions services for centrally licensed resources.

Given all of these available resources and services, the central planning question was which collections and services could be accessed by the UC Merced Library simply by virtue of its being a UC library, and which collections and services needed to be developed locally?

ACQUISITION OF RESOURCES

This section describes UC Merced Library's collection planning and acquisition in four areas: journals, e-books, U.S. government publications, and print books. While each of these information resource types is addressed sequentially, it should be understood that they were acquired simultaneously.

Journals

In 2003, the UC Merced librarians believed that there was no reason for a new research library to acquire journals in print. Accordingly, the first formal collection development policy was that the library would acquire journals in electronic format only unless a desired journal was only available in print. If it subsequently became available electronically, the print

subscription would be cancelled. If a publisher bundled print and electronic versions together, the print version would neither be shelved nor cataloged.

Access to very large numbers of electronic-only journals required UC Merced librarians to select those packages already licensed by the University of California that supported UC Merced research and teaching, and that the library could afford. The UC libraries operate on a coinvestment model for system-wide licensing of electronic resources: negotiation and licensing are conducted centrally by the CDL, but each campus is responsible for paying its proportional cost. Once the librarians selected the desired resources and returned the spreadsheet to the CDL, staff at the CDL worked to add UC Merced to the existing licenses and to arrange for payment.

E-Books

The librarians recognized that the transition from print to electronic format was much farther along for journals than for monographs. In fact, in 2004 it could fairly be said that the monograph transition had barely begun. Both libraries and publishers were beginning to develop mutually acceptable business models and licensing terms, but consensus was still far from being realized. Various vendors had appeared, but it was unclear which ones would still be in business in a few years. The basic question had not been resolved: were books so fundamentally different from journals that a transition to electronic format would not, and indeed should not, happen? Despite the underdeveloped marketplace, the UC Merced librarians believed that e-books would become an important format, and that the level of acceptance by faculty and students needed to be determined. It seemed appropriate for a new research university library to ask this question and to try to answer it.

It was in this environment that the UC Merced Library began its initial, cautious experiments with e-books. The first acquisition was a subscription to ebrary Academic Complete, which provided access to a growing collection, now over 115,000 titles, of scholarly e-books in many disciplines. The cost per title is extremely low, but the library does not receive perpetual access to any of the titles. If the library stopped paying the subscription fee, all access would cease. At the same time, librarians wanted to purchase some titles and acquire perpetual access to them. Approximately 8,500 titles were purchased from NetLibrary, now part of EBSCO. Librarians did

not continue to purchase titles from NetLibrary, however, because of dissatisfaction with the one-user-at-a-time use model that mimicked checking out a print book. This model appeared to be an artifact of print book publication and did not reflect the possibilities, such as unlimited simultaneous access, possible with electronic publication.

In 2004, the author attended a presentation at the American Library Association Annual Conference on patron-driven acquisition (PDA). Presenters included Andrew Pace, then at North Carolina State University and now at OCLC, and a representative from Ebook Library (EBL). Inspired by this presentation, the UC Merced Library began a PDA or, as EBL calls it, demand-driven acquisitions (DDA) plan with EBL in 2005 employing the short-term loan model. For the past seven years, the library also has maintained a DDA plan with MyiLibrary, now part of Ingram. This is a much smaller plan than the one with EBL and focuses exclusively on academic science and engineering titles. Its primary purpose is to provide coverage of certain publishers not available through EBL. It does not employ short-term loans; titles are purchased on the second access.

U.S. Government Publications

As a research university library, the UC Merced Library needed to provide access to U.S. government publications. When the library was being planned in 2004, there was one Federal Depository Library within the congressional district that included Merced, even though each district could have two such libraries. This depository library was over an hour's drive from Merced. Under the circumstances it seemed reasonable for UC Merced to apply to become a depository library. The main question was whether it was appropriate to try to build a depository library by acquiring physical items when federal government publications were becoming increasingly electronic. A practical problem was that the library simply did not have the staff to perform all of the inventorying and accounting activities required by federal regulations to track physical depository items. One possible solution was to become an all-electronic depository library, even though there were no such libraries at the time. The library already maintained a subscription to the Marcive Documents Without Shelves service, which provides MARC records for over 55,000 titles published by the Government Printing Office (GPO). After negotiation with the GPO, the UC Merced Library

was approved as a Federal Depository Library based on the availability of Documents Without Shelves. The library also has access through ILL to the extensive physical document collections of other UC libraries.

Printed Books

When the library was being planned, librarians understood without question that they would acquire print books, regardless of what they may have believed the future to be. At the same time the librarians, if not all of the faculty, realized that a long-range goal of building a one- or two-million-volume book collection on campus was completely unrealistic. The university was being planned as a general UC campus, so the library was expected to support a range of disciplines, including many in the social sciences and particularly the humanities, which were heavily dependent on print books. The rapid transition to electronic content did not change this reality.

Librarians began the process of book acquisition by contracting with YBP Library Services for an "opening day" collection of approximately 13,000 volumes published in 2003 and 2004. These were delivered to an off-site facility, shelved in call number order, and moved to the campus by a professional book moving company for the September 2005 opening. Along with the "opening day" collection, the library established two approval plans with YBP: one in social sciences and humanities and the other in science and technology.

It is somewhat a misnomer to speak of approval plans since all books received from YBP come completely shelf-ready. The only tasks for technical services staff are to check the books against the packing lists and to load the files of bibliographic records that also contain item and invoice data. Normally new books are shelved and available for use within 24 hours of receipt.

As stated earlier, the librarians decided at the beginning of planning that the library would not retrospectively acquire print monographs except in response to high levels of local use or faculty requests for specific titles. At the same time, the library would be open to supplementing the purchased book collection with strategic gifts. The library continues to decline offers of print journals and back runs of *National Geographic,* but accepts gifts of academic books in areas of collection focus. The personal libraries of retiring UC faculty members continue to be an important source for acquiring older print titles, particularly in history, Spanish literature, and ecology.

STAFFING

In 2003, the decision was made to focus additional librarian recruitment on instruction and reference positions with minimal, if any, responsibilities for collection development or academic liaison activities. This decision recognized that funding for new librarian positions would be difficult to obtain, so the library should focus on its core needs. The founding librarians also believed that the traditional subject specialist/bibliographer/academic department liaison model was ill-suited to a new research university library such as UC Merced. The traditional model did not align well with the academic focus on interdisciplinary research and the academic organization of the campus into schools rather than discipline-specific departments. At what level would the liaison activities occur? If at the school level, what type of subject knowledge would be necessary or useful for such an assignment? As mentioned above, collection development at UC Merced largely occurs at scale (e.g., online packages, approval plans, and e-book DDA) rather than at the individual title level. The traditional selector model did not seem to be a good fit in this environment. Within UC, subject selectors/bibliographers are organized into discipline-specific groups. One of the important functions of these groups is to recommend system-wide acquisition of new electronic resources. While the UC Merced Library would not have assigned selectors, the librarians could participate in these groups as appropriate to convey UC Merced's interest in specific new resources, to get assistance in answering highly specialized reference questions, or for other purposes. Finally, the traditional model carries with it significant overhead in the managing of discipline-specific funds. Such a fund accounting structure also seemed poorly aligned with the way UC Merced handled collection development. Librarians wanted to keep collections budgeting as simple as possible through the use of a small number of broad categories; fine-grained subject level accounting was not considered useful. As a result of all of these factors, the head of collection services was the only librarian with any responsibility for collection development and management.

A DECADE OF OPERATIONS

UC Merced welcomed its tenth freshman class in August 2014. This date provides a suitable vantage point to look back at 10 years of operations. The UC Merced Library has demonstrated that it is possible to establish a real,

effective research university library with a small staff by relying on central services and vendor services. Central UC services include the Shared Cataloging Program, CDL acquisitions, SFX link resolver management, management of Melvyl, the UC union catalog, a central institutional repository and digital publishing platform, and extensive support for digital library services and technologies. Vendor services include the approval plan and firm order book services, Documents Without Shelves, and serials subscription management. It is also possible to evaluate the results in the four areas of collection management discussed earlier: journals, e-books, U.S. government documents, and print books; and in staffing as related to collection management. While there was never any intention to create an all-electronic library, the reality today is that the UC Merced Library is certainly a primarily electronic library. As of July 1, 2014, the collection included 1,357,538 volumes of which only 118,071 (8.7%) were print. Including electronic journals and databases, as well as all physical formats such as DVDs and CD-ROMs, the total collection is 92% electronic. For fiscal year 2013–2014, 85% of the total collections budget was devoted to the acquisition of electronic resources.

In 2014, UC Merced has access to 68,940 electronic serials licensed through the CDL, as well as to 43,254 freely available electronic serials cataloged by the SCP. These totals are equivalent to the numbers of centrally licensed electronic journals available at other UC campuses, even the larger ones. At faculty request, the library currently subscribes to 141 locally licensed electronic journals not available through UC agreements and to 20 print journals not available electronically. After 10 years of operation, the library has not received faculty or student complaints regarding the policy of acquiring journals exclusively in electronic form whenever possible. Articles from older print journals held by other UC libraries are scanned and delivered online through ILL. In fiscal year 2013–2014, almost 1,500 articles were provided in this manner.

During the past decade, the acceptance of e-books by faculty and students at UC Merced has significantly increased as evidenced by use data and focus groups. At the same time, print books have not become obsolete or unwanted; a significant number of faculty and students, primarily in the humanities and social sciences, still prefer print books. Some of this preference is related to difficulties in using e-books, primarily digital rights management (DRM) limits that control how the content can be used, and problems

with using various interfaces. Probably the most important barrier to more widespread use of e-books in academic libraries is the sheer number of available publisher and aggregator platforms, each with its own rules, which must be navigated by users. Some of the preference for print books also is related to the belief that the reading experience is better with a print book and that print books provide superior image quality (particularly for scholars in some disciplines in which images are very important). Another issue for research libraries is that many important works continue to be available only in print, or else the availability of the online version is significantly delayed.

Despite these barriers to acceptance, in 2014 approximately 10 times more e-books are available to UC Merced Library patrons than are available in the local print collection. DDA remains the primary means of locally acquiring e-books rather than package or single-title purchases. Over 300,000 titles currently are available through the EBL DDA plan. After three short-term loans (STLs) that may be for either one or seven days at the patron's choice, the title is purchased on the fourth access. STLs and purchases are completely unmediated. While many libraries limit titles in their DDA pool by subject or publisher, UC Merced had made almost the entire EBL catalog available; the only exception had been titles with a list price over $300. The large increases in STL costs suddenly announced by certain publishers in the summer of 2014 forced librarians to remove content from about a dozen publishers and to institute a price cap on STLs to contain costs. Despite these increases in STL rates, DDA remains the primary means of acquiring locally licensed e-books.

In addition to the EBL plan, the library has maintained its non-STL DDA plan with MyiLibrary. The library also maintains its subscription to ebrary Academic Complete. When UC Merced began acquiring e-books in 2004, there were very few titles available through UC system-wide agreements. This situation has changed significantly in the past decade. Now large e-book packages are available from publishers such as Springer, Wiley, and Elsevier, either linked to their journal packages or as smaller stand-alone packages. Currently, there are approximately the same number of e-books available through system-wide packages as through local acquisition. Of course, there is always the possibility that a system-wide e-book package linked to a journal package may be cancelled in the future due to issues with the negotiating of journal package renewals.

To provide additional support for the social sciences and humanities, the UC libraries currently are conducting a system-wide e-book DDA pilot with 65 university presses and ebrary focused on social science and humanities titles. The pilot began in January 2014 when the first set of MARC records was distributed to the libraries by the SCP; the pilot will continue through December 2015. It works similarly to other DDA plans: a title is purchased on the fourth access after three STLs. Prior to the pilot, the libraries examined their print acquisitions from the participating publishers. Based on this data, a multiplier of three times or, in a few cases, four times list price provides perpetual access to all campuses. As of August 2014, there were 2,733 titles available; there have been 843 STLs and 65 titles have been purchased system-wide.

The library remains a Federal Depository Library relying exclusively on the Marcive Documents Without Shelves service to provide access to federal documents. Currently, approximately 160,000 federal documents are available electronically. This number will significantly increase as a result of projects to digitize physical federal documents being undertaken by several library consortia, including the University of California.

The library has the space to house 200,000 physical items. With a print collection of 118,000 volumes and 2,300 DVDs and CD-ROMs, the library is currently 59% full. At the current rate of acquisition, it will be at least 16 years before physical items will need to be withdrawn or sent to off-site storage. The library continues to purchase print books through approval plans and some firm orders with YBP. In response to faculty requests, individual titles also are acquired through used-book dealers and Amazon. When the approval plans were initiated, both the humanities and social sciences plan and the science plan had relatively wide coverage since academic planning was so fluid. As the campus has matured, librarians have focused both plans on existing programs. Approval plan coverage also was narrowed in response to the increasing acceptance of e-books accompanied by increasing pressure on the collections budget. In early 2014, the science plan was completely shut down as a result of decreasing circulation and budget cuts.

In spite of the decreasing rate of acquisition of print books, circulation remains robust for a research library. In fiscal year 2013–2014, users checked out 28,994 items (24% of the collection); undergraduates checked out 18,575 (64%) of these items. Undergraduate circulation as a percentage

of total circulation has remained constant over several years, indicating that the print collection primarily supports undergraduate instruction.

Staffing for collections has remained constant with one librarian responsible for the management of collection development and technical services. Librarian hiring continues to focus on instruction and reference as well as on digital assets. The lack of librarians with specific liaison responsibilities has so far not proven to be a significant disadvantage since all of the librarians conduct outreach activities to the faculty as appropriate. At the same time, the diffuse academic organizational structure has made it difficult for librarians to communicate with groups of faculty at the same time. The real staffing question is whether the library will be able to hire or develop librarians with the necessary skill sets to support new initiatives such as data curation and digital humanities.

The way collection development and management have been carried out, as well as the availability of central services from the UC libraries and outsourced services, have had implications for technical services staffing. The library began with one staff person and one full-time equivalent student employee responsible for cataloging, acquisitions, and stacks maintenance. These staffing levels have worked for 10 years because most of the cataloging and acquisitions work involves importing and exporting large files of records rather than cataloging or ordering individual titles. There is clearly some work with individual items, but this is a small fraction of overall activity. Because of the emphasis on large-scale acquisition of information resources, and also because of extensive outsourcing, one librarian and one staff member have been able to assemble a research library collection in 10 years. In 2013, the library received approval to recruit for a new staff position to handle electronic resources with the existing staff position repurposed to handle physical materials, stacks maintenance, and database maintenance.

The library continues to employ its triage model for providing reference services. For the past several years, the library has also participated in 24x7 chat reference using OCLC's QuestionPoint. For fiscal year 2013–2014, the library reported 2,500 reference transactions with 1,550 of these being virtual. Many of the virtual transactions involved UC Merced students when the library was closed. The library still does not have a reserve operation and still does not collect textbooks. While some humanities faculty have

advocated for a reserve operation and some faculty and students want the library to acquire course textbooks, the consensus remains that these activities are not a good use of the library's resources.

THE NEXT 10 YEARS

As with all libraries, future developments will be constrained by the availability of funding for staff (including librarians), collections, and operations. Within that context, it is possible to make some predictions with a reasonable degree of certainty. The transition from print to electronic formats will continue; print as a percentage of the collection will continue to decline at UC Merced. In 10 years it is likely that 95% of the collection will be electronic and that at least 90% of the collection budget will be spent on electronic resources. The same trends will be manifest at most research university libraries for prospective acquisitions. An increasing number of research university libraries will adopt just-in-time collection development policies, and a decreasing number will be staffed and funded to continue to build collections according to the traditional model. At UC there will be an even greater emphasis on system-wide acquisition of electronic resources with a concomitant increase in the proportion of the collections budget at UC Merced going to the CDL for such resources. This is but one example of the increasing importance of working at the network level for academic library systems and consortia. Other examples are HathiTrust, the Western Regional Storage Trust (a distributed retrospective print journal repository program serving libraries and library consortia in the western region of the United States) and similar large-scale print archiving programs, the adoption of a single integrated library system (ILS), and the increasing provision of central services in cataloging, acquisitions, licensing, reference, and instruction. E-books will become more accepted, even by humanities and arts faculty, as a result of improvements in usability and image quality. There will be greater clarity in the marketplace regarding business and licensing terms for e-books. Digital library services writ large—digitization of physical materials, development of online research portals and digital exhibits, data curation, electronic publishing, curation of born-digital materials, development of open access educational resources, administration of faculty open access mandates—will become increasingly important with significant impacts on hiring and professional development.

Many decisions made by UC Merced librarians at the beginning were novel and even controversial at the time, but have become less so during the past decade. The UC Merced Library will continue to follow the statement on its webpage: "Not what other research libraries are, what they will be."

REFERENCE

Merritt, K., & Lawrence, J. F. (2007). *From rangeland to research university: The birth of the University of California, Merced*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.