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A Campus Conversation: Report on the State of Funding for UCSB Library Collections

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A CAMPUS CONVERSATION:

Report on the State of Funding for UCSB Library
Collections

October 2014

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UC Santa Barbara Library

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Abstract

The library addition and renovation project will provide much-needed space for new programs to support the rapidly changing research environment, but will have no impact on the library's ability to provide access to the scholarly record. Because of the insufficient collections budget, UCSB access to global research necessary for our faculty to compete and excel is now severely at risk. Despite high inflation in the cost of scholarly information resources over the last decade, the collections base budget has remained flat. As a result, UCSB now stands at a significant competitive disadvantage, ranking last among AAU public institutions in collections expenditures. Although the faculty have identified collections as the library service most in need of improvement, acquisitions will decline sharply starting next year. Even with the cancellation of a thousand journals, book purchasing will decrease by 50 percent, with further steep declines in the following years. We invite a campus conversation about a critical issue that concerns the entire UCSB community and urgently requires our collective deliberation and action.

Explanation of Terms

CDL

California Digital Library, an administrative unit of the University of California Libraries. On behalf of the UC campuses, CDL licenses large journal packages, research databases, and ebook collections, usually at low unit cost and with caps on annual inflation. Most CDL resources are funded jointly by the UC campuses, with each campus having access to only those resources for which it pays a cost share. UCSB's participation in many CDL resources has brought enormous benefit to the campus. On the other hand, UCSB has no access to CDL resources that the library cannot afford to fund. CDL resources currently account for two thirds of the library's base collections budget and over 90 percent of its current journal subscriptions.

Serial

An information resource published on an ongoing basis, such as a scholarly journal. The library currently maintains over 2,700 local (non-CDL) serial subscriptions at an annual cost of \$1.2 million as of FY15. Local and CDL serials together currently account for 85 percent of the base collections budget.

Monograph

An information resource published as a finite unit, such as a book. A monograph purchase, unlike a serial subscription, does not constitute an ongoing budget commitment.

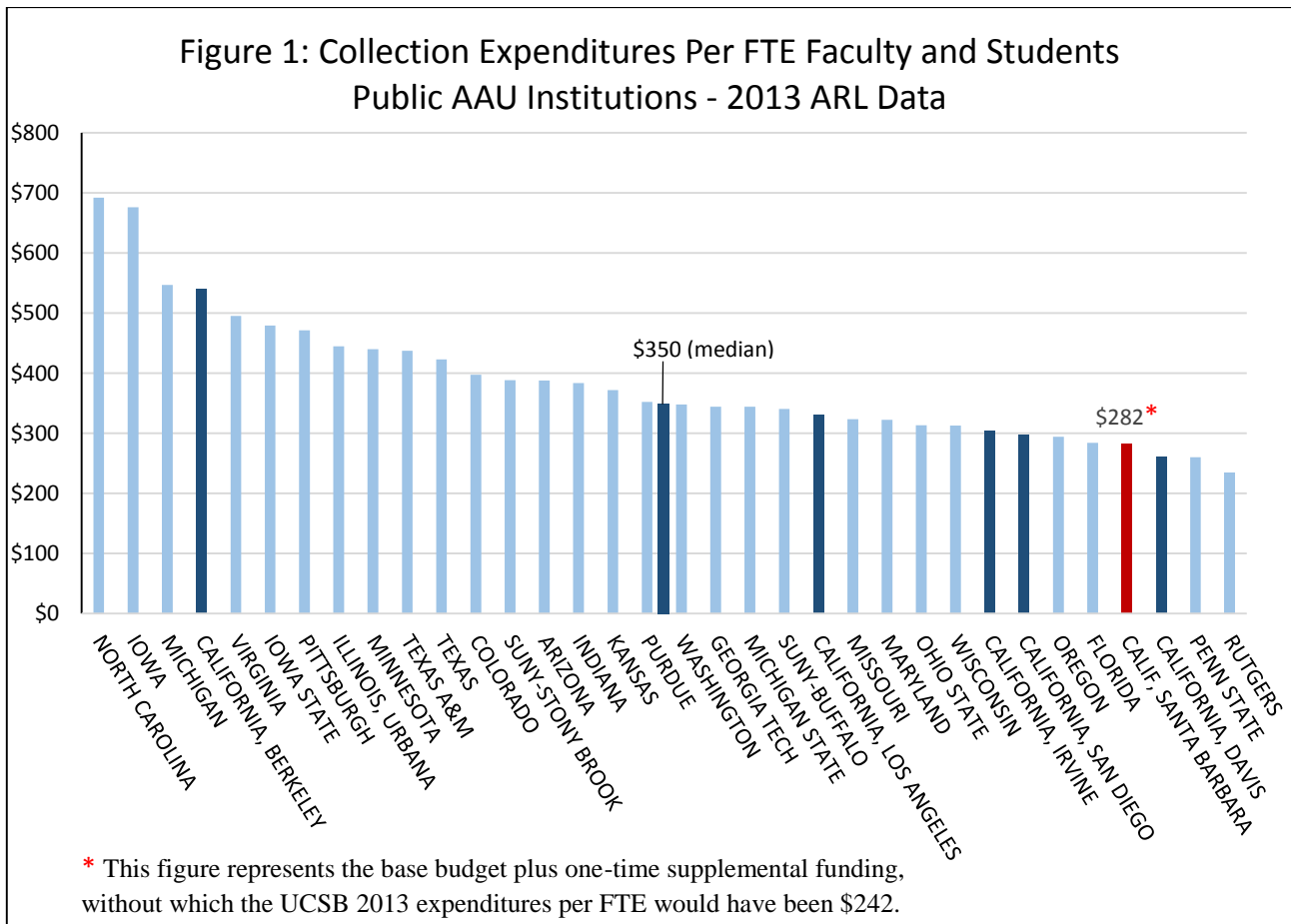
Introduction

UCSB leadership in high-impact research has been made possible by ongoing institutional investment in scholarly information resources and infrastructure. Emblematic of this investment is the long-overdue, multimillion-dollar library addition and renovation project, a visible point of pride for UCSB rising at the center of campus. Yet this large bond-funded investment represents a paradox. Though it will provide urgently needed space and enhanced support for the rapidly changing research environment, it will have no impact on the library’s continuing ability to fulfill a key part of its mission, providing access to the scholarly record. Because of the library’s insufficient collections budget, its ability to support access to global research necessary for UCSB faculty to compete and excel is now severely at risk.

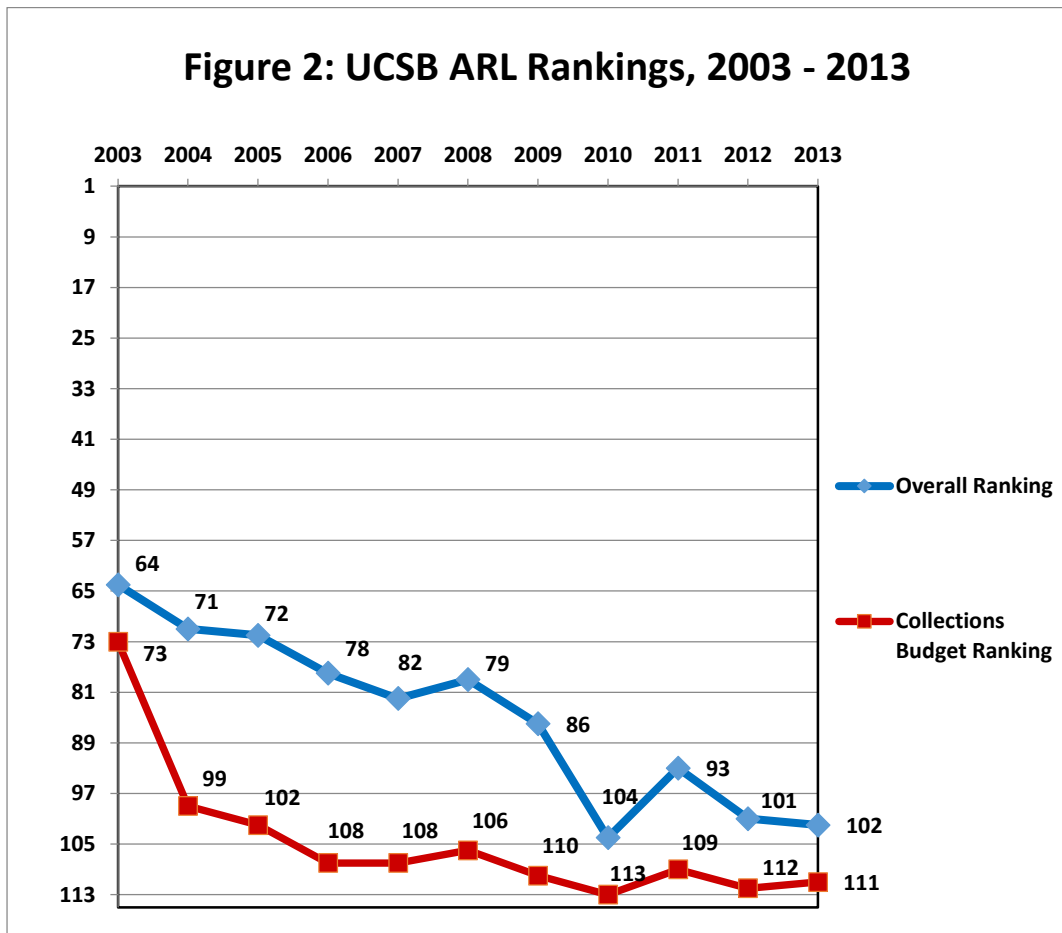
The State of the Budget

The library’s base collections budget of \$4,764,158 has not increased in over a decade despite high inflation in the cost of scholarly information resources during this period. As a result, UCSB now stands at a significant competitive disadvantage that is consistently documented across multiple data points:

- UCSB ranks last among AAU public institutions in total library collections expenditures.
- Based on the median library collections expenditure of \$350 per faculty and student FTE among AAU public institutions, UCSB’s collections budget would be \$7,987,700. See Figure 1.

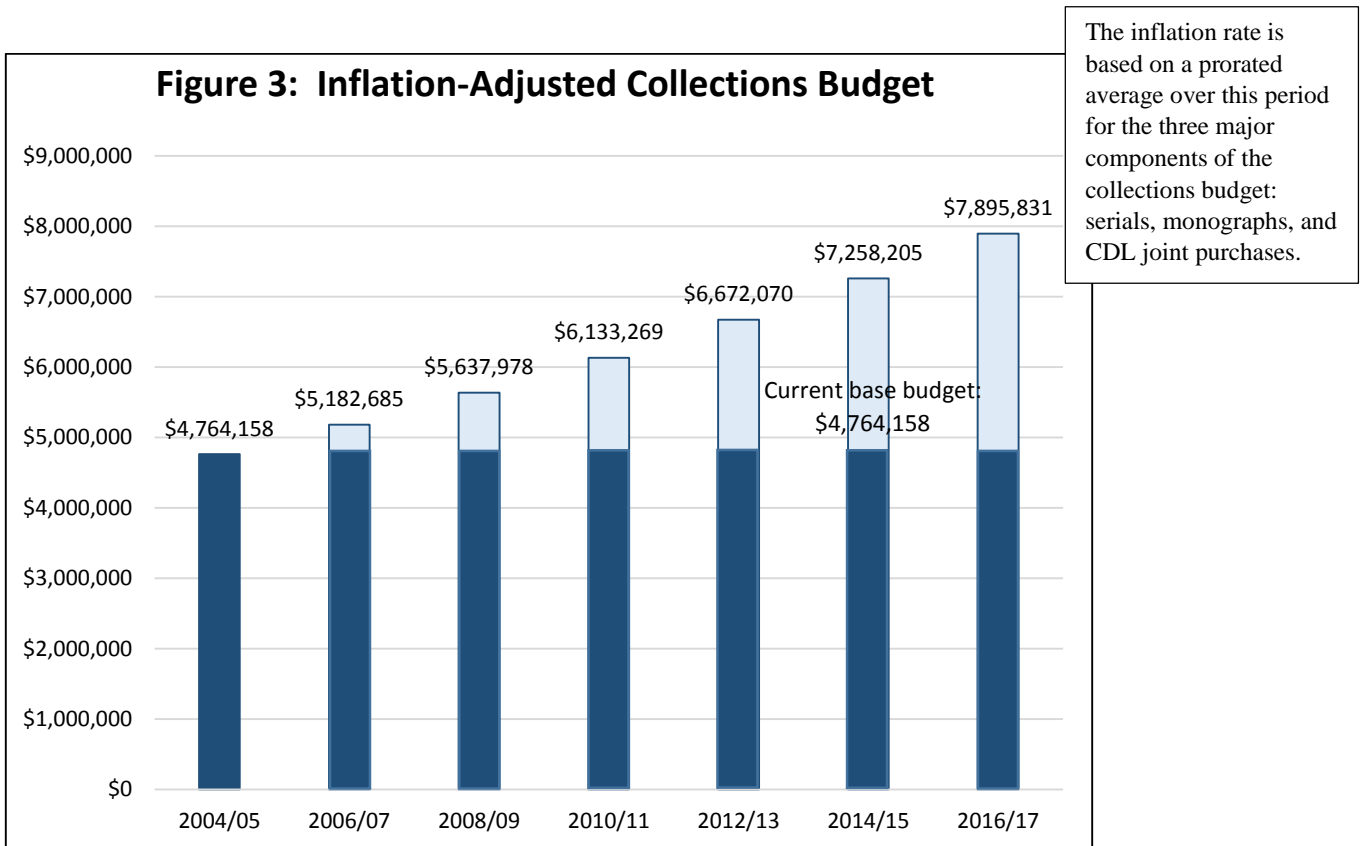


- Based on the median collections expenditure of \$301 per faculty and student FTE among UC libraries that are members of the AAU, UCSB's collections budget would have been \$6,869,422 in 2012/13; accounting for inflation, it would be \$7,472,893 this year.
- Since 2003, UCSB's collections budget ranking has fallen nearly to the bottom among member libraries of the Association of Research Libraries.¹ Its overall ranking, which reflects the level of institutional commitment to faculty research, dropped dramatically during the same period, from 64 to 102. See Figure 2.



¹ ARL, the leading membership organization of academic research libraries.

- If adjusted for an estimated average of 4.3 percent inflation per year since 2004/5, the base collections budget this year would be \$7,258,205. The additional \$2.5 million would restore the campus investment in library collections to the level of a decade ago, but would not address support needed for new academic programs added since then or for faculty-requested scholarly journals and databases. See Figure 3.

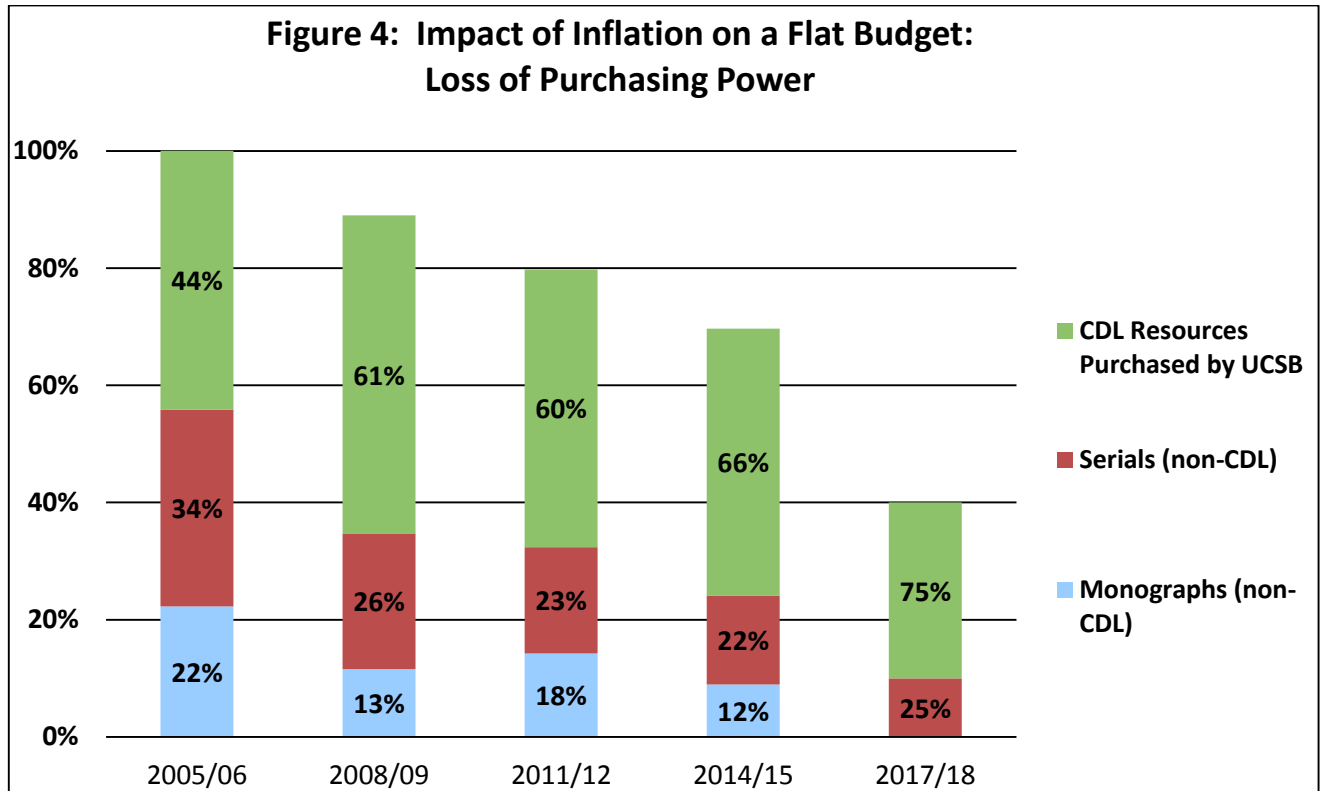


- UCSB must increasingly depend on the investment of other campuses for access to core resources, disadvantaging our faculty in relation to their peers. In 2012/13, the latest year for which statistics are available, UCSB borrowed more materials from other UC libraries than any other campus in the system, and by itself accounted for over 22 percent of all interlibrary borrowing by the 10 campuses combined.

Concern about the state of the library's collections has been clearly voiced by UCSB faculty. According to data from the national LibQUAL survey conducted by the library in spring 2013, faculty across all disciplines perceive the library's electronic information resources and journal subscriptions as inadequate, and they identify the collections as the library service most in need of improvement. These striking survey results are entirely consistent with the quantitative indications of the underfunded collections budget cited above.

The Impact of Inflation

Over the past 10 years, prices for scholarly books and journals have risen well above the rate of inflation in the general economy, with devastating impact on the library's static collections budget. See Figure 4.



Since 2007, journal prices have increased on average 6 percent annually, and academic book prices 4.5 percent annually. In 2013/14 the rates were even higher, at 7 percent for journals and 5 percent for books. Supplements to the collections budget from library salary savings have helped offset high inflation over the past few years, but even with these additions, the library's purchasing power for monographs has declined by over 50 percent since 2007, and serials were selectively cancelled in 2008/09 following a faculty review of the library's subscriptions. Yet the strategy of supplementing collections from salary savings, never intended as a permanent solution, is unsustainable. The library can no longer afford to divert resources needed for critical staff expertise in new technological areas essential in today's complex information environment—areas in which other academic research libraries are already well advanced while UCSB lags behind. Further, after years of high inflation and a static budget, the supplements needed have grown to the point where they are simply too great for the library to sustain. Even the current modest level of acquisitions required a supplement of \$850,000 from the campus administration this year. Next year the amount needed will exceed \$1.1 million, and the following year, \$1.35 million.

With supplements from salary savings no longer available and with no increase to the base collections budget, the library's ability to support both serial and monographic acquisitions will decline sharply starting next year:

- Even with local (non-CDL) serials cut by a third—a cancellation of approximately one thousand journals that would inevitably include many essential titles across all disciplines—the budget for books and other monographs will decline by 50 percent.
- Within another two years, even with further steep cuts to serials, the library's ability to purchase books and other monographs locally (non-CDL) will disappear altogether.
- The library will be unable to fund any new CDL resources without further cuts to local serials and monographs to offset the cost, placing our faculty at ever greater disadvantage in relation to their peers on other UC campuses. All UC faculty contribute to the scholarly record, yet not all have equal access to it. Also, we will lose the significant benefit of cost efficiencies made possible by CDL participation.

CDL: Necessary But Insufficient

Although UCSB benefits substantially from the CDL resources that the library can afford, we cannot rely on our CDL participation alone to provide all of the scholarly information needed to support research and teaching on our campus. UC jointly-funded acquisitions via CDL reflect common needs across the UC campuses but often fail to address specific, unique research programs and curricula on a single campus. Consequently, other UC libraries continue to invest in locally acquired (non-CDL) serials and monographs to ensure an adequate information infrastructure for research on their campuses. Already an outlier in its minimal ability to support local needs, UCSB will fall even further behind the other UC campuses in the next few years.

Examples abound of unmet campus needs for scholarly resources that are not available through CDL. Here are two:

- In order to gain access to the legal research database Hein Online, one faculty member had to commute to UCLA before resorting to pay out of pocket for weekly access, and asked, "Isn't there some way we could get this . . . Either driving or paying takes a lot out of me. Alas, it's not in the California Digital Library."
- A new faculty member recruited from another institute was appalled that UCSB did not have access to the *Journal of Visualized Experiments* (annual subscription price: \$7,490). The only option for acquiring this title, which is not available via CDL, was to cancel nine other journals to offset the cost.

Is Open Access the Answer?

The UCSB Library has vigorously championed open access as a potential alternative to the crisis in scholarly communication brought about by unsustainable inflation in the cost of scholarly information resources. Yet a recent report concludes that open access is “having very little impact on the fundamental model and pricing strategies [of academic publishers]. . . . The pay-for-access model, especially as represented by the ‘Big Deal’ bundled content approach, reigns supreme, and the pricing power wielded by the top STM [science, technology, medicine] publishers remains well intact.”² Although open access holds promise for the future, it is not yet a reliable alternative for the vast majority of scholarly resources that faculty rely on to remain competitive, including the exorbitantly priced journals from for-profit publishers that are essential to the research process. Ultimately it is up to faculty to bring about fundamental transformation of the system of scholarly production and dissemination, and it will take years to do so. The library will continue to advocate for change, but it is not at the center of this debate, nor can it control the outcome.

A Campus Conversation

Many research libraries have supplemental sources of revenue for their collection budgets. The UCSB Library, by contrast, does not benefit from a library enrichment fee or receive budget augmentations to support an increasing number of students. We do not receive a percentage from research overhead or other campus fees, or share in a pool of campus resources. The multimillion-dollar library building and renovation project now underway is a visible emblem of UCSB’s commitment to its library, but it represents a paradox, for as we view the daily progress of the construction, the outlook for the library’s ability to provide access to the scholarly record will only worsen.

Starting next year, acquisitions will decline sharply. The library is no longer able to divert resources to collections, sacrificing its ability to build new-century programs, stay abreast of emerging technologies, and invest in professional expertise and growing services. Though the faculty have identified collections as the library service most in need of improvement, without an increase to the base collections budget we will have no choice but to cancel hundreds of essential journal subscriptions within one year and cease nearly all local book purchasing within three. Though UCSB aspires to rank among the most distinguished research universities, its library now ranks at the bottom in collections expenditures among AAU public institutions. Though our faculty require timely access to global scholarship in order to compete, we must stand aside as other UC libraries join in funding critical CDL resources we cannot afford, while we instead become ever more dependent on borrowing from collections built through the investments of other institutions.

We invite a campus conversation about a critical issue that concerns the entire UCSB community and urgently requires our collective deliberation and action.

² EBSCO Information Services, “Serials Price Projections for 2014,” <http://www2.ebsco.com/en-us/Documents/PriceProjections2014.pdf>.