

Introduction

The old proverb tells us “the only constant is change” and indeed UCLA Library Special Collections (LSC) exists during a time of great transformation. We are a new unit, created in 2010 to unify the services and operations of five special collections of the UCLA Library: the Center for Oral History Research; Charles E. Young Department of Special Collections; Louise B. Darling Biomedical Library History Division and Special Collections for the Sciences; Performing Arts Special Collections; and University Archives. From the outset, the purpose of unifying these units has been to work more efficiently, reduce redundant operations, build capacity, and to serve our users in the best possible ways. In addition to the formidable challenges of blending the cultures, policies, workflows, and communities of each of these formerly separate entities into a coherent whole, we face the many challenges and opportunities inherent to contemporary special collections and archives as a whole.

Our Mission, Principles, and Directions define who we are, what we do, what we value, and what we intend to change and improve. It sets forth a collective vision for our future and specific goals and activities to get us there. It also establishes a new vibe, where we evaluate new opportunities and possibilities by how well they connect to our mission, principles, and directions. Our directions are at once bold and ambitious but focused and achievable.

The Mission, Principles, and Directions emerged from an intensive series of planning activities that involved all Library Special Collections staff, UCLA Library administration and colleagues from allied units, and UCLA faculty and students and other external researchers. This process set a new tone of inclusiveness in which we value input from all LSC staff members, our colleagues, and our users in our decision-making processes. Our Directions align explicitly with the UCLA Library Strategic Plan, 2012-2017 and underscore Library Special Collections’ contributions to advancing the work of the library as a whole.

I am grateful to our colleagues and users who provided input into this process, our facilitator Lisa Lawrence who guided us through, and the LSC Division Heads, who put in a great deal of quality time and effort to ensure the success of our planning effort. Most of all, I am grateful to the tremendous staff of Library Special Collections who engaged in this process with honesty, open minds, and creative spirits. I greatly look forward to applying the collective energies of this talented group toward the new horizons we envision.

Tom Hyry
Director of UCLA Library Special Collections

Mission

UCLA Library Special Collections inspires discovery, cultivates knowledge, advances research, and preserves cultural heritage to create a distinctive learning environment for the UCLA community and society-at-large. We welcome researchers to explore our collections of rare books, archives, manuscripts, oral histories, and other materials and to utilize our services.

Principles

The following principles demonstrate our commitment to excellence and set the foundation for our culture and actions:

Open Access

Support the free exchange of information and ensure all of our holdings can be discovered and used, and reach as wide an audience as possible.

Service

Provide expert staff to meet the needs of our users as quickly, effectively, and efficiently as possible and to anticipate and address evolving research needs.

Collaboration

Partner with colleagues in the UCLA Library, on campus, in our surrounding communities, and in the library and archives profession to build capacity and achieve common goals.

Education

Teach others the significance of our cultural heritage and the importance of primary research skills and ensure our holdings are incorporated into all levels of the UCLA curriculum.

Innovation

Develop creative, practical, and flexible strategies to meet the challenges of the future by harnessing the best new methods and technologies.

Leadership

Demonstrate Library Special Collections' role as fundamental to the mission of the UCLA Library and the university by enacting and broadly promoting our mission and principles.

Directions

1. Optimize the research experience by making our holdings easier to discover and use and by providing access to special collections materials when, where, and how users want it, to the greatest extent possible.

Rationale:

The success of all of our core activities, be they acquisitions, preservation, cataloging, processing, or reference, depends on our ability to connect the resources we steward with researchers who can use them effectively for research, learning, writing, and teaching. Library Special Collections prides itself on its service ethic; this strategic priority seeks to improve upon a set of quality services we already offer. Our efforts to improve the research experience are informed directly by user feedback we received as part of our planning process and seek to implement new approaches, technologies, and philosophies that have emerged in the special collections profession over the past generation.

Activities and Goals:

- * Investigate and develop policies, workflow, and an implementation plan for patron use of cameras in all of our reading rooms.
- * Establish workflow to ensure newly acquired holdings are discoverable through the library catalog and/or the Online Archive of California, as part of our accessioning and acquisitions processes.
- * Develop and implement an approach to make hidden collections discoverable by researchers in at least a basic way in the catalog, the Online Archive of California, and other discovery tools.
- * Review reproduction policies, procedures, and fees and implement user-friendly approaches where possible.
- * Implement the Aeon system, possibly in collaboration with other UC special collections and/or the Clark Library, in order to empower patrons and streamline and automate many of our reference, reader services, and duplication activities.
- * Partner with the Digital Library Program and other units to develop streamlined digitization processes and effective interfaces to facilitate innovative teaching and research activities by faculty, students, and other researchers.
- * Create research guides for each curatorial area and other topics that compile holdings in coherent and easy-to-use fashion.

Vision: By 2015, LSC will provide a research experience for users that allows for dramatically improved capacity to discover special collections holdings and use them creatively and flexibly for research, teaching, learning, and other pursuits.

2. Enhance digital services and operations to work more efficiently, meet the challenges posed by born digital materials, and make holdings more broadly available for research and teaching.

Rationale:

New technologies continue to transform special collections, providing new capabilities to expose our holdings, make work processes more efficient, facilitate new types of research, reach new audiences, and develop new types of collections. Technological advancements have also created a rapidly expanding and evolving set of media formats that challenge our ability to collect, preserve and make accessible the contemporary record. Technology now undergirds almost every aspect of special collections work. While we have several staff members that are tech-savvy, we need to grow our technical skills in order to maximize opportunities provided by new technologies to more effectively meet our mission and meet challenges posed by born digital holdings.

Activities and Goals:

*Develop comprehensive approach to acquire, preserve, process, describe, and provide access to born digital holdings, including:

- Develop standard methodologies for working with donors to advise them of how to best take care of their digital holdings.
- Acquire necessary equipment and develop standard accessioning procedures for transferring digital holdings from donors' hard drives and external storage devices into LSC custody.
- Work with Digital Library Program, Library Information Technology, and the Preservation Department to ensure the Islandora repository framework can be configured to ingest and preserve digital archives and other LSC holdings.
- Implement and document standard approaches to arranging and describing born digital materials so that they can be discovered and used by researchers.
- Develop policies and protocols for the use of born digital holdings in our reading room and, if possible, by remote researchers.

*Create an overall approach to digitization and digital programs for LSC as a whole that results in substantially increased production of digitized version of analog holdings to be used for research, teaching, exhibitions, and other uses.

*Develop standard templates and training documentation to facilitate the creation of online exhibits by a wide variety of LSC staff members, CFPRT fellows, faculty, and students.

*Identify necessary areas for staff development and create a training program that provides staff at all levels with opportunities to learn and practice new skills.

*Establish a culture of innovation, where LSC consistently engages with technological developments and experiments with new approaches to our core operations.

Vision: By 2015, LSC will be recognized as leader in the library, on campus, and in the profession in its innovative uses of new technologies in the pursuit of special collections' objectives. We will have a rationalized and programmatic approach to digital projects and will be able to confidently acquire, preserve, and make accessible special collections holdings in born digital form.

3. Expand outreach efforts to increase awareness and use of LSC's services and holdings and to ensure incorporation of special collections materials in teaching and learning.

Rationale:

As a new department, LSC needs to have a comprehensive and comprehensible communications strategy in place that tells our story and promotes our holdings and services. In addition to relying on users to find us through the traditional research and discovery tools we create, we need to actively reach out to potential users. In particular, we must enhance our outreach efforts on campus to meet a growing demand for primary sources to be featured in the curriculum and seize on this opportunity to increase LSC's impact on the education of UCLA students.

Activities and Goals:

*Develop a new website that effectively promotes Library Special Collections and its services, holdings, and operations, reflects the integrated nature of the unit, and provides a highly functional and attractive online presence for our users, colleagues, and friends.

*Create a "press kit" that articulately defines the LSC identity, holdings and curatorial areas, and services and operations that we can easily distribute to donors, funders, and other external constituents and partners.

*Create systematized methods for promoting new acquisitions, exhibitions, programs, and newly cataloged and processed holdings.

*Expand our use of social media to promote our holdings and services to campus, community, scholarly, and professional audiences.

*Create a programmatic approach to instructional services that facilitates increased use of special collections holdings in UCLA classes.

*Create partnerships with librarians and other departments in the UCLA Library and with faculty and students on campus to facilitate use of special collections holdings in UCLA curriculum.

Vision: By 2015, we will articulate a coherent narrative of LSC's programs, services, and holdings that will be communicated broadly and effectively in a variety of media and used consistently in outreach efforts to faculty and students to ensure heavy use of LSC resources in teaching, learning, and other projects.

4. Increase operational effectiveness by consolidating services and programs and re-envisioning use of spaces.

Rationale:

UCLA Library Special Collections remains a relatively young organizational entity and two distinct truths persist:

- 1) The process of integrating the services and operations of our formerly separate units remains ongoing. While we have made great strides in our efforts to organize the new unit, we must continue to improve in our efforts to work in a more cohesive, efficient, and coordinated way.
- 2) Our existing spaces are inadequate to support an enterprise-level special collections unit. Use levels demand a larger reading room and more space to stage collections requested for use; our teaching spaces are not large enough nor well-equipped with modern technology to facilitate student learning within our security perimeter; better facilities are needed for staging acquisitions so that we can effectively establish basic physical and intellectual control over new holdings; lack of adequate space for exhibition preparation, loans, and processing of oversize holdings challenges our abilities to expose our collections in new ways; and having staff distributed among seven locations in four buildings provides a countervailing force in our efforts to work more cohesively and collaboratively.

As a department in a larger library, creating a concrete plan to address our space needs presents risks due to many factors that are unknown and outside of our control and affect our abilities to create change. Focusing on space heightens it as a priority area for which we will advocate and seize opportunities.

Activities and Goals:

* Integrate University Archives public services point into the A-level YRL LSC public services operation.

*Analyze Biomedical Library Special Collections services, operations, and spaces to determine areas in which we can productively integrate.

*Create and document standardized policies, procedures, and work flows for activities in each functional area.

*Analyze and determine improved uses of existing LSC spaces.

*Resolve issues surrounding the name of LSC, both as a whole and the sub-units, to communicate who we are and help navigate our physical and virtual locations to staff and the outside world. This requires balancing the needs of branding our newly integrated department with the legacy of our existing units.

*Develop an overall vision for LSC space and create a campaign to actualize.

*Build upon the work of the Security Committee to identify and implement highest priority improvements to ensure security for our collections and staff.

Vision: By 2015, LSC will function seamlessly as a fully integrated unit with improved uses of existing spaces and a vision and campaign in place to create dramatically improved facilities for research, teaching, and other special collections activities.