



Date: April 22, 2024
To: Senate
From: Senate Committee on Libraries
Re: **2024/2025 Annual Report**

The [Terms of Reference for the Senate Committee on Libraries](#) define its scope and relationship with Senate and other Senate committees. Annually in May, the committee presents a report to Senate on its business and proceedings over the previous academic year.

The Senate Committee on Libraries (SCL) met four times during 2024/2025:

September 25, 2024
November 13 2024
January 28, 2025
March 26, 2025

The committee is also due to meet on May 21, 2025.

In submitting this report, the Chair acknowledges with gratitude the support of University Librarian Jonathan Bengtson; Associate University Librarians Lisa Goddard, Ry Moran, and Karen Munro; Executive Assistant to the University Librarian Kaelan Smith (Secretary); and the members of the Committee.

A. Administrative and Organizational Matters Considered 2024–2025

1) Sub-Committee on Appeals

The membership to the Sub-Committee on Appeals is Simon Minshall, Adrienne Williams Boyarin, Danielle Geller, Catherine McGregor, and Victor V. Ramraj.

2) New Positions

Two new librarians were hired during summer 2024: Nick Rochlin (Data Science) and Sarah McGill (Health Data Science). In addition, Matt Huculuk has been appointed the inaugural Director of the Kula Library Futures Academy (more on this below) and Shahira Khair will be the new Associate University Librarian-Advanced Research Services.

3) Space Optimization

The Libraries is currently engaged in space planning/optimization. Previous space planning (from pre-2020) is now out of date and needs to be reevaluated. Meanwhile, most of the monitors and chairs in the ground floor study have been replaced, and more TekBooths (1- and 4-person booths) have been added to the ground floor for private meetings and study space.

4) External Review Response

Libraries underwent an External Review at the end of May 2024 with reviewers Eric Higgs (Environmental Studies, UVic), Susan Parker (University Librarian, UBC), and Melissa Just (Dean of Libraries, University of California). Members of the SCL met with the reviewers to discuss the role of the committee and the Libraries' future.

The recommendations provided in their report are being used to guide Libraries strategic planning throughout 2025. In September, the full report was made available for Libraries staff. A response was submitted October 2024, and the Libraries will engage in dialogue at 1, 3, and 5 years regarding responses to the reviewers' recommendations. This year (2025), Libraries conducted various self-studies as well as 34 stakeholder interviews with faculty, students, deans, AVPs, and non-academic administrators and did a thematic analysis of the interviews, which showed 8 key areas of interest/concern: AI, budget pressures, internal silos, societal polarization and public trust, decolonization and DEI, programmatic flexibility, student experience and well being, and national and international engagement. A strategic planning retreat was held on 6 March 2025, and a new strategic plan will be launched summer 2025. Libraries is also in the middle of a website redesign.

5) Budget

The Collections budget (see more below) is not expecting a cut this year. However, fluctuations in the USD exchange rate can represent thousands in the Libraries' budget. Spending will be conservative for this reasons.

B. Substantive Matters Considered 2024–2025

1) Elimination of Library Fines

As of 1 September 2024, Libraries has eliminated overdue fines for many items, including books, scores, CDs, maps, and microforms. Media equipment will continue to have an overdue fine, though the amount has been reduced. Additionally, items will be automatically renewed for up to 2.5 years so long as there is no request by another patron. Recalled, interlibrary loan, and reserve items are still required to be returned on time, as is equipment like laptops, GoPros, cameras, etc. The fines were eliminated to reduce barriers to access, and to have realistic and enforceable fines. Fine elimination will also bring UVic Libraries in line with peer institutions who have adopted similar policies. Students whose accounts have been blocked due to unpaid fines can talk to the Ask Us desk about fine debt.

2) Digitization of Transgender Archives

Libraries received a \$280,000 USD grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources' Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices program, to digitize audio and visual items from the Trans Archives. This grant funding will allow for 2 new term positions: a metadata librarian and an outreach and ethics coordinator.

3) 60th Anniversary of the Opening of McPherson Library

14 November 2024 marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of McPherson Library. A student-centred event for the occasion was celebrated on December 3rd and included the unveiling of new artwork on the glass panels of the newly renovated lobby (by Hesquiaht artist Geena Haiyupis), as well as a large wall map of Treaty Relations in the Salish Sea developed by UVic Geography graduate student Leah Fulton in collaboration with Prof. Brian Thom (ANTH) and Ry Moran (Associate University Librarian-Reconciliation).

4) User Feedback Survey and Results

Data Curation and Organizational Analysis Librarian Shahira Khair shared with the committee the results of a User Feedback Survey conducted March-April 2024 to gauge library user needs and satisfaction, with a focus on physical and virtual spaces, collections, and services. Libraries surveyed faculty, staff, and students and received almost 2,500 responses. Students commented on crowdedness and difficulty finding study spaces, on washrooms not being universally accessible, comfort of spaces, and the need for more neurodivergent-friendly spaces. Most students self-reported using Brightspace as a preferred method of finding research and study materials over library databases and other repositories.

The Libraries scored highly in terms of user satisfaction across all user groups: staff is seen as being respectful and providing high quality support, study spaces are in high demand, and workshops and events are highly valued by the community. The survey revealed key opportunities to improve the number of seats and workspaces, to increase accessibility to washrooms, to streamline web presence to improve awareness of resources, to integrate more library communications into Brightspace, and to address identified gaps in the collections.

5) Collections Update (including Collections Budget Overview)

Dean Seeman (Director, Collections Management) and Evelyn Feldman (Acquisitions and Electronic Resources Librarian) provided the committee with an overview of current collections management. Most of collections spending each year is already committed: 74% is continuations, 18% monographs, and 8% collections support (e.g., postage and handling, etc). Most decision making around collections is a matter of whether to renew or cancel existing subscriptions.

84% of the collections budget is spent on electronic resources and large packages (the remaining 16% is split 50/50 with print collections and collections support) Over 25% of the budget is tied up in "Big Deals" with publishers like Elsevier, Wiley, SAGE, etc. Purchasing in bundles is cheaper than purchasing individual titles; however, these "Big Deals" are difficult to exit, reducing budget flexibility. Purchasing power is also impacted by currency fluctuations, as most purchases are in USD, as well as by inflation (Libraries purchases USD at the start of each year to mitigate potential future weakness of the Canadian dollar). 60% of the UVic collections budget was spent through consortia. Consortial purchasing allows Libraries to negotiate collectively to get prices and conditions that would be difficult to negotiate alone. Transformative agreements are also negotiated between institutions and publishers to help transition to full Open Access in a way that is cost-neutral for Libraries. A new transformative agreement with the Royal Society of Chemistry, for instance, will allow all authors to have open access publishing fees waived for the next two years.

According to current usage data, electronic resources are far preferred by faculty, staff, and students. In the 2024 fiscal year, there were over 1.8 million electronic journal uses and only 70,000 print circulations. While this is an improvement from the 20,000 titles that circulated in 2020, it is far below the 200,000 print circulation trends of the early 2010s. If a faculty member requests a title, however, it will almost always be made available: if it cannot be purchased, the interlibrary loan system should be able to provide the resource.

6) Kula: Library Futures Academy

Matt Huculak (inaugural Kula Academy Director) provided the committee with an overview of the new Academy. This initiative is possible due to donors Drs. Brian Gaines and Mildred Shaw, who retired to the island from the UK with an interest in education, knowledge, and technology. Libraries' *Kula* journal was born in 2016 from conversations with Brian and Mildred, and they now want to create something more substantial with the Academy. The Academy asks the question: what is the evolving role and value of the research library? The Academy builds on the existing Farallon Book Arts Lab, the Historic Computing Lab, Center for Academic Communication, and commitment to liberating knowledge by making it accessible to all. Kula Academy has recently hired post-doc Nathaniel Brunt, whose work involves entering conflict zones to collaborate with local communities on preserving their archives (these may be brought to UVic for stewardship while conflict persists). Future goals of the academy include establishing trusted AI frameworks, funding student success, and the creation of a physical space to help address research silos on campus. Kula: Library Futures Academy will officially launch on 15 September 2025 in an all-day event with guests Lawrence Hill, Richard Ovenden, Leslie Weir, and Richard Van Camp.

7) Future of Digital Collections

Corey Davis (Digital Preservation Librarian) provided the committee with an overview of his recent research into how large language models (LLMs) might transform how research libraries approach digital preservation and access to collections. Corey provided examples of how the "hallucinations" (made-up stuff) created by most LLMs can be combatted by drawing from a specific archive to generate information through retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), to allow Libraries to enrich LLMs with data from their collections: data is extracted and embedded in a vector database where semantically similar pieces of data are chunked together; when you query the LLM, the closest semantic chunks will be matched, then translated out into text and passed onto an LLM like ChatGPT, which will then give you a response. With RAG, the LLM is not changed in any way, but the information it is pulling from is different. This research will help with continued exploration of AI usage.

8) Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Pedagogy Toolkit

Subject librarians Aditi Gupta and Ying Liu, who frequently work with international students, presented to the committee a toolkit they developed to implement inclusive teaching and culturally responsive practices into instruction and interactions with students. There is a diverse student population with varying needs and cultural sensitivities that librarians and instructors can struggle to incorporate. The toolkit is available to help:

<https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/inclusiveteaching/>

Respectfully submitted,
2024/2025 Senate Committee on Libraries

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Deborah Curran, Faculty of Law
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Brian Thom, Faculty of Social Sciences
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Simon Minshall, Faculty of Human and Social Development
Andrew Weaver, Faculty of Science
Jenn Hodge, Student Senator
Sansal Gumuspala, GSS Student Representative
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