

Artistic and Cultural Works in the Library: Process for adding and removing items

Library Cabinet | March 2023

The Library seeks to provide a safe, secure, respectful, and productive environment for activities associated with research, teaching, and learning. Simultaneously, we strive to make our spaces welcoming, inclusive, and inspirational for all Library users. This document describes the considerations, process, and participants involved in considering proposals to add or remove artistic and cultural works on display in our campus libraries. This document applies to all campus libraries that comprise the University Library and report to the University Librarian.

Scope

Works intended to be displayed in public areas (other than as part of a formal exhibit) within campus libraries reporting to the University Librarian fall within the scope of this document. The period of display, and size and nature of the work will determine how extensive a review is recommended. All artistic and cultural works that are not already part of the Library collections are recommended to be considered through the lens of this review process.

Our libraries currently have a variety of artistic and cultural works on display -- many of which have been in place for decades. As the Library refreshes and renovates campus libraries we have the opportunity to review if the current works in those places (e.g., art, busts, sculptures) are aligned with the university's mission and values. Occasionally the Library is offered new items from donors and other campus units for display. There are many considerations to determine the desirability and feasibility of accepting the items, and the process to make the final decision is important as well.

Over time the context of artistic and cultural works may evolve, suggesting possible removal of currently displayed items. The Library will consider these proposals. If a particular work has been reviewed previously, the Library will share the previous assessment and rationale, and ask the proposal to highlight the changes that might merit reconsideration.

Considerations

Standard considerations include: desirability (location, effort); impact (equity & inclusion, content, representation, artist, provenance); feasibility (design, installation, inspection); and value (insurance/liability, protection, care). Core participants include: university librarian, Library architect, Cabinet, division heads, Library equity and inclusion standing committee, Library chief diversity officer, BAMPFA director, director of the campus's office of DEIB, Capital Projects/campus inspector, and professional installer (such as Atthowe). Depending on the nature of the item and its proposed location, additional considerations and stakeholders may be added.

In general, steps in the process include:

- Proposal is submitted to the appropriate AUL/director (the senior leader responsible for the library spaces displaying or suggested to display the item) to add or remove specific artistic or cultural works with the rationale and recommendations.

The proposal should frame its argument consistent with the Library's mission, vision, and strategic directions; Library values; and the campus' diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging goals. The proposal must make a compelling case for the recommended action. Proposals should explicitly include: proposer's name, affiliation with UC Berkeley, and email address; description and relevance of work under discussion; current and/or proposed location for the work under discussion; anticipated length of time for the display; anticipated impact on members of the Library and university community if the work is displayed or removed as proposed; approaches for addressing any expenses related to the action; and any other relevant information or arguments about the desirability, feasibility, impact, and value of the work. If the work has been suggested for removal previously, the proposal should highlight the factors that have changed since the previous assessment.

- The AUL/director informs Library Cabinet that consideration of adding/removing a work has been proposed so we can coordinate if multiple locations/units are involved.
- For removals, the AUL/director will confer with the University Archivist to gather context, and confer with Library Development and University Donor and Alumni Relations as needed.
- For installations, the AUL/director and University Librarian will confer with the Library architect about desirability, feasibility, costs, and value, seeking further information from the submitter, donor, and/or other knowledgeable groups as needed (e.g., Library IT for installations with a technology component); responses are shared with the AUL/director.
- If there is sufficient interest in proceeding, the proposal is shared by the AUL/director with Library and campus entities appropriate for considering the impact (e.g., Cabinet, Library division head, Library equity and inclusion committee, BAMPFA director, director of the campus's DEIB office); responses are shared with the AUL/director.
- If there is sufficient interest in proceeding:
 - and this is to add a work, the AUL/director and Library architect will confer with Capital Projects/campus inspector and a professional installer.
 - and this is to remove a work, the AUL/director will confer with Cabinet and begin discussions with Library Communications about a written explanation, possibly to be installed at the site where the work had been located, with the context. The AUL/director will coordinate with Library Development and UDAR as needed. Disposition of the works will be determined by the AUL/director with guidance from the people and units noted above.
- The AUL/director will respond to the proposal submitter with a decision and next steps.