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LAUC-B Resolution on the Importance of Diversity in Collections

In less than six months after its outbreak in the United States, the global Covid-19 pandemic has brought sweeping changes to the way academic libraries operate. Most of these changes are temporary emergency responses aimed at alleviating the reality that most libraries are physically unable to open to their communities. Staff continue to adapt to new workflows that they can perform from the safety of their homes. In the best case scenarios—and at UC Berkeley in particular—small groups of essential workers have returned to campus to maintain the flow of analog materials and to pioneer new public services such as on-demand scanning for e-reserves and Oski Xpress contactless pick-up of print material from our brick and mortar libraries. For UC Berkeley, the slow return to campus has been part of a carefully coordinated phased approach to addressing the pandemic but which could have lasting consequences.

As a result of the Covid-19 related economic crisis, nearly every academic library in the U.S. is experiencing across-the-board budget cuts. Book dealers and librarians alike are having to be even more judicious with their selections. Within this context, the UC Berkeley Library's English-language approval plans have been set indefinitely to e-preferred while reduced amounts of print material are being

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acquired from vendors in the U.S. and worldwide. From mid-March through August 2020, all UCB campus libraries were unable to receive print and other analog materials due to mailroom closures. Once print ordering resumed in early September, selectors were encouraged to opt for e-resources over print given that many faculty and students were accessing collections remotely.

At the same time, deep and permanent cuts to discretionary funding in fall 2020 combined with the higher cost of e-resources has translated into a drastic reduction for print monographs. Print books and serials, which are incidentally the most troublesome to acquire, catalog, and process during pandemic conditions, have been hit the hardest. But it is within these paper publications that diversity and inclusiveness live; disciplines such as art history, ethnic studies, gender studies, history, literature, music, and area studies depend on their survival. Comprised of creative expression, cultural heritage, primary sources, and scholarship, they document and represent diversity of race, ethnicity, creed, language, gender, sex, geographic place, and political perspective. Unlike most of the digital sources that we increasingly rent or lease access from large vendors and aggregators, paper volumes are owned in perpetuity and serve as the dependable currency, or bedrock of our collection, which we can share freely with other libraries through ILL services and underlie the success of the innovative HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service.

UC Berkeley's collection of more than 13 million volumes, in hundreds of distinct languages from every corner of the planet, is world renowned for its sheer size but also for the breadth and specificity, or vernacularity, of vantage points. From obscure independent publishers to mimeographed sheets bound in cardboard, Berkeley's collection has aspired for balance, equity, and bibliodiversity when other academic libraries have settled for collections that mirror one another in both form and content. Responding to the work taking place in its classrooms and in the offices of its researchers, the UC Berkeley Library champions underrepresented voices and breaks free of the homogenization of collections that has come to characterize so many college and research libraries across North America.

Strong and diverse collections like Berkeley's inspire and allow researchers to immerse themselves in cutting-edge discovery and teaching, but what happens when the acquisition of diverse resources becomes vulnerable to reduced funding or reprioritization? It becomes a downward spiral whereby diminishing viewpoints become impoverished as many print books from the Global South or by small publishers never become ebooks or are collected by only a handful of academic libraries. If collection budgets tilt further toward expensive digital resources from large-scale commercial enterprises, access to traditionally underrepresented ideas will vanish, perpetuating the marginalization of perspectives that the [ACRL Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and the Print Collecting Imperative](#) identifies as "reinforcing legacy political, ideological, and cultural hegemony and subalternity by reproducing them in the representation of the world compiled in collections that support North American research and teaching."

LAUC-B embraces the Library's efforts to build and provide access to collections that help scholars work against racism and discrimination. By elevating print monographs in our collections during the pandemic, we would be embracing the worldviews of our diverse user community by ensuring their

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representation in our collections. We therefore urge the UC Berkeley Library and its eight Affiliated libraries to prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion in collection development work by fully supporting print acquisitions. By doing so, the UC Berkeley Library will be fulfilling its mission to “help current and future users find, evaluate, use and create knowledge to better the world.”

LAUC-B is in solidarity with the wave of bold and intelligent statements issued recently by the following professional library organizations that share these same concerns:

- [Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials \(SALALM\) in their Collection Development and Equity in the Time of Covid-19 Task Force Resolution \(6/11/20\)](#)
- [Middle East Librarians Association \(MELA\) Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19 \(6/22/20\)](#)
- [Committee on South Asian Libraries and Documentation CONSALD Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19 \(7/17/20\)](#)
- [Equity and Access in Higher Education and Academic Libraries Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic statement by Joint Area Studies Task Force signed by representatives of many institutions and professional bodies \(7/31/20\)](#)
- [Statement on Collection Development and Acquisition Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic signed by the Council on East Asian Libraries \(CEAL\), the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources \(NCC\), and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians \(SCSL\); signed by the Council on East Asian Libraries \(CEAL\), the North American Coordinating Council on Japanese Library Resources \(NCC\), and the Society of Chinese Studies Librarians \(SCSL\) \(8/13/20\)](#)
- [Committee on Libraries and Information Resources of the Association of Slavic East European and Eurasian Studies \(ASEEES CLIR\) Statement on Collection Development in the time of COVID-19 \(8/14/20\)](#)
- [Collaborative Initiative for French Language Collections \(CIFNAL\), the German-North American Resources Partnership \(GNARP\), and the Slavic East European Materials Project \(SEEMP\) in their joint European Studies Statement on Collection Development, Access, and Equity in the Time of COVID-19 \(8/20/20\)](#)
- [Statement published by the Committee on Research Materials on Southeast Asia \(CORMOSEA\) \(9/3/20\)](#)
- [Statement on Inclusion and Equity in Special Collections, Archives, and Distinctive Collections in the University of California Libraries \(January 2021\)](#)

Be it resolved, LAUC-B supports the efforts of these groups without any reservations and recommends that all libraries at UC Berkeley take the following steps:

1. Reevaluate “e-resources first” strategies and other current collection development policies, including a recommendation to incorporate in-country publishing data to formulate long-term collection development policies, and to support the goal of highlighting marginalized voices and groups;
2. Restore base budgets for print and other analog formats to pre-Covid levels and ensure timely access through an ecosystem of specialized regional vendors and small publishers—often the

only available sources—thereby ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion in scholarly collections and resources;

3. Protect and augment funding to maintain the expert staffing necessary to conduct rich collection development and the processing required to ensure that all collections are accessible and supported (e.g. conduct national searches for full-time Africana, African American Studies, and Latinx Studies librarians for the Library);
4. Preserve the budgets and local staffing workflows necessary to participate in the Cooperative Acquisitions Programs of the Library of Congress, and advocate for the robust support of their Overseas Office initiatives;
5. Expand collaborative efforts for digital and enhanced physical access to materials through partnerships and consortia focused on cooperative collection development, cataloging, and digitization, increasing support for Open Access, and other digital initiatives from all regions of the globe.

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