

TRANSFORMING THE UC DAVIS LIBRARY FOR THE 21st CENTURY

*Excerpted from remarks made by UC Davis University Librarian MacKenzie Smith at
the UC Davis Golden Society alumni event April 17, 2015*

The library is a part of the university that touches everyone – every student, faculty member, researcher, and in every academic field. The library has a bold vision that builds upon its core strengths and expertise, and creates a 21st century institution that not only meets the needs of today, but sets an example for other academic research libraries to follow. In this information age and knowledge economy, we need to prepare our students to go beyond their native habitats of Google and Wikipedia and into the tools of serious scholarship. And we need to help the faculty deal with the new demands that technology puts on their research and publishing. Here are just a few examples of the challenges the library is tackling to meet these needs.

First, take information overload.

Today's students and faculty can become completely overwhelmed by how much information they have easy access to online, and they need help to learn how to navigate the wild west of the Web, and to make sense of what they find there. Librarians are the expert navigators who can help faculty and students, and teach them the new research skills they need to find high-quality, trustworthy scholarly resources – print or digital – among all the noise. Librarians train students to use complex, sophisticated online databases, and to manage their personal body of work. In other words, librarians help students and faculty to become efficient and sophisticated researchers in a rapidly changing research environment.

Next, consider space and the evolution of libraries into living laboratories

Students crave quiet and contemplative places to study, far away from the distractions of home, coffee shops, or the Memorial Union. But that's not all they need from the library. 21st century students need access to the latest technological innovations that can transform their learning experience. We need to re-design the library as a living lab, with dynamic teaching areas that include the latest educational and collaboration software and devices, multimedia studios, 3-D printer technology and, importantly, collaborative and well-equipped group study spaces. Research shows that students learn best by doing, and today's students have grown up with a fluency in technology. The library needs to adapt to that fluency and provide an environment where learning is active, interactive, and immediately relevant.

And then there's research

These days, UC Davis is doing over \$700 million worth of research each year and aiming for \$1 billion. Because the library tracks what's happening with research all over campus, we are uniquely positioned to promote that research to the world and amplify its impact beyond the campus. We can help bring together related research from different departments, done by researchers who are often unaware of each other since the university is so large now. The UC Davis Library's online research portals will provide one-stop shops for discovering what UC Davis is doing about important research in areas like viticulture & enology, autism, or transportation studies. We'll do that by collecting the university's research in one place, but also by applying modern analytics and visualization technologies to help people understand the research in new ways, and to promote the university's great discoveries.

Finally, how do we preserve the digital?

Think about the distant future. Libraries have a unique responsibility for stewarding the knowledge from the past. In our collections we have ancient cuneiforms, medieval manuscripts, photo and map archives, and much, much more. But now, there's an accelerating shift to digital. Libraries are the only organizations that worry about how to protect the knowledge of our time for the future, so we play a critical role in preserving knowledge in all formats. There's a great quote from a Rand Corporation report that said "digital information lasts forever—or five years, whichever comes first." Right now, there is a very real risk that we won't have a record of the late 20th and 21st centuries since we don't have the apparatus in place to preserve it. We struggle to keep up with technological innovations that produce new knowledge. We call this future the Digital Dark Age, where future students and scholars will have no idea what we know today, because the record of those advancements was lost to software upgrades, dead hard drives, and evaporated storage. Libraries are stepping up to this challenge but we need a lot of help.

The future of the UC Davis Library is very ambitious but we're up to the job. We are committed to ensuring that the students of the 2060s have as much access to knowledge, and as wonderful an experience at UC Davis, as previous generations of students have had.

For more information about the library vision, or to learn how you can help the library in its transformation, please contact Jean Korinke, Director of Development, jfkorinke@ucdavis.edu, (530) 752-2422.