
Transforming UC Library Services: SILS

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Project Team: [SILS project rosters](#) (300+ members over four years; led by the SILS Working Group)

Timeline: June 2017-December 2021

PROJECT SUMMARY

The UC libraries successfully migrated from ten independent library systems to a single shared enterprise solution (SILS) and discovery platform (UC Library Search). As a result, more than 300,000 UC faculty, students, researchers, clinicians and staff now have access to the 41 million print volumes, 10 million ebooks, 120,000 digital serials, 49 million digitized items of the UC Libraries with unified searching and borrowing. The outcome of a four-year, multi-phase project, which included a needs assessment and extensive requirements development, this accomplishment was possible due to the hard work of hundreds of library experts from across all 10 campuses, the two regional library facilities and California Digital Library (CDL). UC Library Search provides access to a print collection that is second in size only to the Library of Congress.

What this means:

- A single-unified interface for all UC libraries and the public allows users to find materials from any campus quickly and simply, saving time and effort.
- Enables timely, data-driven, decisions about the UC Libraries shared collection
- Positions the UC Libraries for future innovation and greater collaboration

INNOVATION & COLLABORATION

The SILS project has further expanded the collaborative capacity and impact of the UC Libraries. Success required campuses to relinquish immediate control of a local enterprise system, and come to agreement on a shared systemwide platform with the CDL managing the operations center. The SILS and UC Library Search launch is a significant leadership, technical, logistical and project management achievement. A further positive impact to library employees has been the joy of establishing and strengthening relationships with colleagues across the UC system, the professional growth opportunities realized through this collaborative work, and the anticipation of building on the power of the partnership. The SILS project also created the opportunity to productively channel any concerns about losing autonomy into an ongoing shared governance structure that ensures all voices are heard and that decisions are made collaboratively..

PROBLEM STATEMENT/PROJECT GOALS

Mission: Transform library services and operations through innovation and collaboration

As systems aged and vendors decommissioned and replaced tools, UC's patchwork of intricately connected library and resource sharing systems provided diminishing returns, requiring higher staff and system resource investments just to maintain the status quo. Even with expert staff, aging systems put intercampus resource sharing (making a book from any given UC campus available on any other UC campus) at risk of becoming fragmented and no longer viable.

To ensure continued and future collaboration involving library collections and collection-based operations and services, the Council of University Librarians (CoUL) charged a working group to license and implement a single, shared, systemwide integrated library system (SILS) and to create a governance structure to support shared decision-making.

IMPACT AND PROJECT SUCCESS

Slogan: Shaping the future together

The project had one critical measure of success - migrating all campuses onto the same library system while winning staff hearts and minds to support the change. In July 2021, all campuses went live together on Ex Libris' Alma and Primo VE and launched UC Library Search. By listening to the needs of team members and stakeholders, prioritizing open and transparent communication, and confronting difficult issues, the team built trust and confidence over the four years of the project. This was, by far, the most challenging aspect of the project and the most rewarding.

Connected for the first time: SILS makes campus library collections integrated, shareable, more diverse, and user-friendly, reinforcing the mission of the UC. For the UC research community – from faculty to first-year students – patrons have direct access to the bedrock of the UC Libraries collection. Patrons can see items borrowed, request extensions and manage one's account from a single sign-on. With hybrid learning and work becoming the “new normal,” UC Library Search supports remote students and researchers by allowing them to pick up circulated materials at any UC campus or to have a digitized article sent directly to them.

Positioned for innovation: The UC SILS enables library staff to innovate and create new services that were not possible in stand-alone campus ILS environments. SILS presents opportunities for integration with a variety of other library services and related products, such as learning management systems, potentially improving workflows and reducing redundancies. Staff benefit from greater collaboration in developing, managing, and analyzing the numerous and various UC collections.

Stewarded resources wisely: Upgrading to a shared, modern solution keeps systemwide costs low and greatly reduces the need for additional systems and infrastructure. If the required system upgrades had been carried out independently, UC's total annual cost - including a number of additional services needed to connect and communicate between individual library systems - would have been 40% higher annually.