



Administrative Board of the Library

February 22, 2021

Dear Provost Blouin:

Given the financial fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, we the elected Administrative Board of the Library (ABL) want to assert the importance and value of the University Libraries to the entire UNC community as well as the citizens of the state of North Carolina. No other institution on campus serves the instructional and research missions of all the professional schools and the College of Arts and Sciences as completely as the Library does. The Library promotes sustainable scholarship; global engagement; equity, inclusion, and accessibility; and data science for over 40,000 students, staff, and faculty at UNC. The Library must provide all of these services for a steadily growing population of students and researchers yet does not have the capacity to generate significant revenue while under the steady influence of inflation.

In this time of crisis in the economy, government, and public health, the Library's core pillars of *Student Success*, the *Research Enterprise*, and *Preservation and Accessibility* have never been more relevant to our campus. The Library continues to be a core resource for teaching and scholarship. In many ways, the importance of the Library has only grown as our community strives to learn and work remotely. Our Library has adapted to this crisis to continue to serve our community in new and vital ways. For example, during the pandemic, the Library instituted a "digital first" strategy to accelerate its transition away from printed materials and has dramatically increased the volume of resources available online to UNC users.

Student success. *The Library provides innovative and ever-expanding core instructional services for the University's curricular priorities, necessitating that we protect staffing and operating budgets.* Each academic year, the Library directly instructs nearly every undergraduate student at Carolina in addition to its work with graduate students and faculty. Non-STEM graduate students in particular are often minimally funded and require the Library's resources to conduct their research. The Library also conducts thousands of consultations both in-person and online as a supplement to course instruction and in support of independent projects. In addition, thousands of users have accessed online tutorials and many other instructional and resource initiatives developed by the Library to address the needs of undergraduate and graduate students. Particularly critical in recent years has been the Library's role in responding to the exponential growth of faculty instructional needs and student-driven calls for digital and data literacy and data carpentry. While the Library has worked to make these offerings scalable by developing workshops and modules, they are highly responsible with a limited staff size for this crucial instructional need across campus.

Research enterprise. *Faculty use the library as core infrastructure for both teaching and research; further reducing the Library budget may not save funds at all, as faculty will need to invest other resources to make up for the loss.* The recently announced budget cuts result in funding for the Library that is inconsistent with an academic library at a flagship Research I institution. The resulting budget will be on par with libraries at Research II institutions. Reduction of Library funding could result in decreased ranking for the UNC School of Law (as law school rankings are highly dependent on library collections); a decrease in Association of Research Libraries (ARL) ranking; inhibited faculty recruitment and decreased faculty retention; and ultimately a downgrade from Research I to Research II status. The Library is an essential partner in support of the research enterprise. Librarians collaborate with faculty and students to identify, access, visualize, and evaluate information to create new knowledge. The Library is an indispensable part of the cycle of research. Researchers require the essential resources licensed by the Library to conduct research, write articles, submit proposals, and obtain grants. To this end, the Library has partnered with SAGE publishers to increase opportunities for UNC faculty as well as graduate and professional students to publish the results of their research as open access with peer review. Other forms of research occur in a more fast-paced fashion: imagine a physician trying to identify the best practice for treating concussion in a library without the latest research.

Preservation and accessibility. *The Library's preservation of information and facilitation of access to reliable information is essential to all disciplines of study and the broader North Carolina community.* Preservation continues to be a priority, as well as accessibility to our resources. The Library is the University's most democratic organization because it ensures that

students, faculty, and staff have access to information and life-long learning regardless of their major, ethnicity, income, physical limitations, or geographic barriers. The Library also continues its commitment to the broader community. There is a tremendous volume of misinformation and disinformation online. The Library helps its communities find credible resources that are scientifically accurate and thoroughly vetted, playing a key role in promoting health literacy across the state of North Carolina. Librarians know that equitable access to information is crucial to democracy, which is why the Library's sustainable scholarship campaign to make UNC research open to the world must be supported. The Library supports sustainable scholarship through its disciplined budgetary outlays for both print and electronic materials and its promotion of peer-reviewed indexed open access journals and institutional repositories.

To continue these excellent practices and achieve these important outcomes, the Library must maintain both its services (e.g., reserves, interlibrary loan, and digitization) and its outreach programs (e.g., exhibitions, book talks, and public history programs). In addition, the Library must maintain its operations, continue its current journal subscriptions (which are already reduced in number compared to previous years), and continue the purchase of books so that collections do not suffer. To facilitate these programs, the Library must continue operation of branch libraries, employ its current staff, and continue to hire students.

The ABL strongly advocates for the Library because of its influence on so many aspects of the University:

- **Student success.** *The Library provides core instructional services for the University's curricular priorities.*
- **Research enterprise.** *Faculty use the library as core infrastructure for both teaching and research.*
- **Preservation and accessibility.** *The Library's preservation of information and facilitation of access to reliable information is essential to all disciplines of study and to the broader North Carolina community.*

We all know that you face difficult choices during this unprecedented crisis, and we appreciate how hard you have worked to support the Library. We want to underscore how the work done in the Library amplifies and supports the learning and research that marks our University as one of the world's best. We invest our knowledge and resources to enhance access to learning and to foster the success and prosperity of each rising generation. We also extend knowledge-based services and other resources of the University to the citizens of North Carolina and their institutions to enhance the quality of life for all people in the State.

The ABL asks the University to consider more flexibility for the University Libraries – especially given its collections which will inevitably be cut – and to ensure that cuts made to the Library's budget be no more than, and preferably less than, those made to the College of Arts and Sciences. We hope you will continue to work with us to preserve the current strength of the Library as we move forward.

Administrative Board of the Library

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