

**COMMITTEE ON LIBRARY AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION (LASC)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2025-2026**

TO THE MERCED DIVISION OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE

In AY 2025-2026, LASC held a total of nine regularly scheduled meetings in order to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's [Senate Bylaw II.IV.4](#). Some business items were discussed and resolved via email.

Areas of Focus

Open Access (OA) and Diamond OA

This academic year, LASC promoted the UC Libraries Arts & Humanities Open Access Fund, a pilot program that provides support for article processing charges (APCs) for early-career authors publishing in arts and humanities journals. To help raise awareness of this opportunity, LASC distributed information at the campus level to the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts (SSHA) Department Chairs and encouraged them to share details about the fund and available resources with their faculty, particularly early-career scholars in the arts and humanities.

LASC consulted with the University Archivist and Librarian for Special Collections to discuss challenges and opportunities related to Open Access (OA) publishing, with a particular focus on Diamond OA. Discussions highlighted barriers such as limited funding, lack of awareness, and persistent misconceptions about OA quality. LASC emphasized the importance of educating faculty, graduate students, and early-career researchers about alternative, community-driven publishing models and the value of scholarly work beyond journal prestige. Faculty and graduate students frequently seek guidance on publication agreements, OA publishing fees, and available publishing options. LASC discussed strategies such as virtual office hours, training sessions, workshops, and integrating OA information into graduate student programming. Continued education, targeted outreach, and accessible resources could help increase awareness and adoption of OA publishing opportunities.

LASC also consulted with the Director of Publishing, Archives & Digitization at the California Digital Library, Catherine Mitchell, to discuss Diamond OA and opportunities to expand its use at UC Merced. Discussions focused on ways faculty can support Diamond OA through publishing choices, advocacy, institutional engagement, and future outreach efforts including raising awareness during Open Access Week and continuing campus conversations about OA publishing.

LASC also consulted with the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) Chair Gopinathan. Discussions focused on whether current evaluation practices, which often emphasize journal prestige, may unintentionally reinforce reliance on large commercial publishers and how greater emphasis could be placed on the quality and rigor of scholarly work instead. CAP Chair Gopinathan encouraged LASC to issue guidelines of their own regarding considerations for publication venues, and suggested LASC to request feedback from CAP in the Fall. Further discussions between CAP and LASC are expected during AY 26-27.

Concerns Regarding Cuts to Library Collections, Advocating Funds for the Library

For many years, the Library worked to preserve systemwide collection agreements, as information resources, which include both locally funded subscriptions and materials provided through agreements with the UC Libraries via the California Digital Library (CDL), are vital to all campuses.

This academic year, LASC transmitted a memo to the Senate Chair and outlined the significant and compounding risks of cuts to the university library collections. LASC believes it is critical that campus leadership have a clear understanding of the harmful and subtle consequences of cutting collections as they make difficult budgetary decisions. In addition, LASC offered ideas to Divisional Council (DivCo) on how to use the MacKenzie Scott (MKS) funds.

LASC expressed its strong support to the Chancellor for completing the full scope of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant project currently underway at the Library. This project represents a rare opportunity to strengthen UC Merced's research infrastructure, preserve invaluable collections, and enhance the campus's national profile. LASC proposed that the MacKenzie Scott Funds be used to complete this project, and emphasized that this investment is timely, cost-effective, and transformative.

Privacy Protections of Faculty/Library Materials for AI Training

LASC raised concerns about the potential use of faculty materials submitted through Interfolio, the system used for academic personnel reviews, to train commercial generative AI systems. Interfolio is owned by Elsevier, which is a major academic publisher that may be developing AI tools using large datasets of scholarly content. Unpublished materials, such as book chapters submitted as evidence of research progress in merit and promotion reviews, could potentially be used to train AI systems without faculty consent. LASC transmitted a memo to the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and CAP requesting clarification on whether safeguards exist to prevent faculty materials in Interfolio from being used for AI training. If such safeguards are not in place, LASC proposed requesting the implementation of appropriate privacy protections.

LASC also provided input on the Systemwide Report of the Academic Senate Workgroup on Artificial Intelligence (AI), which include recommendations related to research, instruction, admissions, and data stewardship. LASC raised concerns about the use of library materials for AI training, and whether print and archival materials might be digitized and sold or licensed to AI

companies. Libraries have historically partnered with vendors, such as through digitization projects, while retaining certain rights and access. However, AI specific use of such materials has not yet been widely addressed. The report acknowledges tensions around data sharing and open access, but largely defers responsibility for policy development, particularly to libraries, without offering concrete guidance. LASC agreed that these issues may be beyond the scope of the report but should be elevated to systemwide committees.

LASC Representation on Divisional Council (DivCo) and LASC Chair Compensation

The LASC Chair has been included as a standing permanent guest at the Divisional Council (DivCo) meetings so that LASC can stay informed about ongoing discussions in the Academic Senate. Divisional Council members voted unanimously to support the proposal.

A proposal was submitted to DivCo that the LASC Chair receive compensation from the Academic Senate for their service to the University. The proposal advocated for compensation beginning AY 26-27. The Senate Chair agreed to reallocate existing funds rather than introduce new funding. Specifically, the compensation previously designated for the Committee on Academic Freedom (CAF) Chair will now be split evenly, with half going to the CAF Chair and half to the LASC Chair.

Consultation with the University Librarian

LASC benefited from consultation and input from University Librarian Li on the topics including updates on the Library's budget cut exercise, service hours, and cancellation of subscriptions.

LASC was updated on the progress of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) project at the UC Merced Library throughout the academic year. Additional updates included the library budget planning, challenges around operations and collections budget, titles for cancellation, extended library hours during finals week, and the transition of the Library's IT team to the Office of Information Technology (OIT) as part of a broader campus effort to centralize IT services and improve operational efficiency.

Campus Review Items

LASC reviewed and commented on:

- Bachelor of Science (B.S.) Degree in Computer Science
- Hybrid BA-BS to PharmD Program Proposal
- Proposal for Master in Public Health Program
- B.S. Degree Program in Artificial Intelligence
- Proposed Merger of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute with the Campus Climate Institute

- Generative AI (GenAI) Educational Policy

Systemwide Review Items

LASC reviewed and commented on:

- Systemwide Academic Senate Committee on Climate Change and Sustainability
- Systemwide Report of the Academic Senate Workgroup on Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Presidential Policy BFB-BUS-43, Purchases of Goods and Services; Supply Chain Management

Other Correspondence:

LASC took the following actions on the following items:

- LASC issued a memo to Senate Chair Mithcell outlining the significant and compounding risks of cuts to the library collections. (January 16, 2026).
- LASC issued a memo to Senate Chair Mitchell outlining the recommended uses of the MacKenzie Scott (MKS) funds (January 20, 2026).
- LASC issued a memo to Provost Dumont providing feedback on the Library's FY27 budget proposal (February 19, 2026).
- LASC issued a memo to the Senate Chair regarding compensation for the LASC Chair's service to the University (February 10, 2026).
- LASC issued a memo to Chancellor Muñoz regarding the proposed use of the MacKenzie Scott (MKS) funds to support the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Library renovations (March 2, 2026).
- LASC issued a memo to VPAP Hansford & CAP regarding LASC's inquiry into the privacy and data protections associated with UC Merced's contract with Interfolio/Elsevier (May 21, 2026).

Guest Consultations:

LASC was joined by the following guests:

- Associate University Librarian for Library Operations, Eric Scott, on updates on the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) project and library collections budget (November 14, 2025).
- University Archivist and Librarian for Special Collections, Jerrold Shiroma, on Diamond OA (December 5, 2025) and OA trainings and information sessions (April 8, 2026).
- Associate University Librarian for Library Operations, Eric Scott, on the Library's FY27 Budget Cut Proposal (February 4, 2026).
- CAP Chair, Ajay Gopinathan, on improving Diamond OA publishing on campus (February 25, 2026).

- Director of Publishing, Archives & Digitization at the California Digital Library, Catherine Mitchell, on Diamond OA publishing (March 18, 2026).

Systemwide Updates

LASC Chair Ojeda represented UCM at the systemwide University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communication (UCOLASC) and kept LASC informed of updates throughout the year. The main UCOLASC items included updates on the California Digital Library (CDL), systemwide collection cuts, addressing artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education, and advancing Open Access (OA) publication of UC-authored monographs.

Respectfully submitted:

LASC members

Christopher Ojeda, Chair (SSHA) – UCOLASC Representative

Michael Dawson, Vice Chair (SNS)

Spencer Castro (SOE)

Maria DePrano (SSHA)

Sholeh Quinn (SSHA)

Ex-officio, non-voting members

Haipeng Li, University Librarian

Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco, Library Consultant

Gaonoucci Vang, Graduate Student Representative

Blue Jasper, ASUCM Representative

Staff

Sang Lee