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The UCLA Libraries Affordable Course Materials Initiative: Expanding Access, Use, and Affordability of Course Materials

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In 2013, the **UCLA Library** launched the Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI) with four overarching goals:

- Lowering costs of course materials to students
- Building open educational resources (OER)
- Greater integration of library collections in teaching and learning
- Increased engagement with faculty and students

Broad sponsorship for this initiative was essential to its successful launch, and the pilot was developed and scoped, in part, through many conversations that occurred at various levels across campus. As a result of these conversations, the ACMI is endorsed by the Office of the **UCLA** Executive Vice Chancellor and the **UCLA** Academic Senate, partial funding is provided by the **California Digital Library**, and support comes from the **UCLA** student government and the campus bookstore.

The ACMI is the latest in a diverse set of services designed and led by the **UCLA Library** to promote the broadest possible access to and use of library collections in support of **UCLA's** mission of teaching and research. The **UCLA Library** previously partnered with **UCLA Bookstore** by sharing the terms of our negotiated license agreements. The collaboration enabled the bookstore to avoid paying permission fees for content (typically online journal articles) that the library already licensed on behalf of the campus community. This partnership resulted in substantially lower costs for creating print course packs, especially for classes that rely heavily on journal articles.

The **UCLA Library** modeled the ACMI on certain elements of programs created by the libraries at **UMass Amherst** (<http://guides.library.umass.edu/oer>), **Temple University** (<http://sites.temple.edu/alttextbook>), and **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (<https://libraries.mit.edu/scholarly>) that focus more specifically on open educational resources (OER) and open textbooks. We envisioned our program being broader and focused on the diversity of material used in teaching that extends well beyond any notion of a textbook alone. We designed the ACMI to more effectively utilize existing **UCLA Library** collections, develop new ones, and help faculty enhance their course materials in ways that support affordability and ease of access. By building on our colleagues' initiatives, we hoped to provide another model for academic libraries.

In addition to better integration of **UCLA Library** collections and services into instruction, the ACMI also supports Library efforts to identify OERs that meet the needs of the faculty and that are alternatives to high-priced commercial publishers' textbooks. We also work with **UCLA** faculty to more effectively make their scholarly articles, books, and instructional resources available to students and colleagues via open access.

The ACMI incentivizes instructors to use low-cost or free alternatives to expensive course materials. These alternatives include open-access scholarly resources; library-licensed and owned resources; digitized content from **UCLA** collections; and learning objects and texts that faculty create themselves. We awarded \$1,000 to instructors teaching courses

with enrollments of fewer than two hundred students and \$2,500 to instructors teaching courses with larger enrollments. These modest yet significant sums were meant to offer an incentive for instructors to take the time to identify new resources, adjust syllabi, and modify assignments. The funding could also be used to cover any actual expenses incurred by the instructor. In addition, the faculty committee reviewing the initial round of applications suggested that we designate collection development awards to build or enhance library collections in support of specific courses.

Since announcing the ACMI last March, the **UCLA Library** has received 27 applications. Applicants have come from many different departments across campus, though English has had the most (5), followed by Nursing, Law, and Chinese (see Figure 1). We've made 23 awards: 19 monetary awards, three collection development awards, and one for expertise to help address copyright issues for an open access textbook. A total of \$27,500 has been given in cash awards, with an additional \$2,916 spent on acquisitions. In addition to the awards, each recipient is assigned a library staff member to serve as the awardee's point person offering subject expertise, intellectual property and copyright advice, digitization services, and technology assistance.

Assessing Success

Although not the sole measure of the pilot's success, direct savings to students are significant and readily quantifiable: thus far, the more than 1,000 students in ACMI-awarded courses have saved a collective total of \$112,000. This figure was calculated by figuring the cost of the materials used the last time each awarded course was taught and the cost during the ACMI-awarded quarter, and then multiplying that difference by the number of students enrolled during the ACMI quarter. Several examples provide additional context. The last time an awarded mechanical engineering course was taught, students had to buy a \$200 textbook. During the ACMI quarter, the professor created a "textbook" from his lecture notes, which he provided at no cost to his 56 students, saving them \$200 each for a total of \$11,200. Students in an awarded theater course were able to access all their assigned readings through the **UCLA Library**, saving them a total of \$11,375.

In addition to the cost savings, qualitative feedback from instructors has been positive. One professor for an English composition class noted that participation in the ACMI has "really been a nice shot in the arm for my teaching," and an assistant professor in Chi-

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Figure 1

nese and Religion noted that she was able “to make the course less expensive for students, to waste less paper, and to use a wider variety of materials so that the course was more engaging.” Another professor noted that the ACMI helped him “get to know the resources available through the library better and who to go to with questions about particular topics. This has actually proven helpful for both my teaching and my research.”

Student feedback in course evaluations was also positive. A student in an awarded course in ecology and evolutionary biology noted, “The lack of a textbook and the fact that we read current and applicable research journal articles was very useful and I would seek out courses offering this sort of material in the future,” and another commented, “As for the reading material, the online library readings were EXPONENTIALLY better than a textbook because I didn’t have to spend money that I do not have and [the instructor] tailored the readings so that each reading complemented course material.”

At the time that the ACMI was launched, the **UCLA Library** was also exploring options for setting up a journal article subvention program. Early on, we discussed the equity challenges between researchers in highly-funded scientific areas and those researchers in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. We were concerned that journal subvention could in fact perpetuate the inequities currently in the scholarly publishing environment. Also, a recent analysis of article processing charges (APCs) found that APCs from commercial publishers are significantly higher than those charged by open access publishers, like **BMC** and **PLoS**.¹ Finally, a newly-released report from **JISC** found that “frequently it was unclear whether the APC payment was made for an article to be totally open, embargoed, available for deposit in a repository”² This data suggests that subvention for APCs primarily benefits large commercial publishers and does little, if anything, to transform scholarly publishing. The data also confirms to us that we made the right decision in launching the ACMI and not setting up a journal article subvention fund.

Next Steps

Next steps include reporting results to our current campus partners and securing funding for the ACMI’s next phase. We also plan to identify additional campus partners, including deans, chairs, student government officers, and other campus leaders. We hope to continue to more fully integrate the ACMI

Gilles de La Rochefoucauld

against the grain people profile

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BORN & LIVED: In Paris as did my parents and grandparents.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Worked as a publisher until 1990. Since then, CEO of **Aux Amateurs de Livres/ AMALIVRE**. I am also member of the board of a publishing company and a Parisian Hospital.

FAMILY: I have been married for 34 years. My wife works part-time in the company. Our eldest daughter died accidentally in 2002. Our second daughter is married and has two children. Our son, 28, is working in an IT company, and our youngest daughter (24) is still a student. She is currently in Cambodia for a six-month placement at a local newspaper.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I have enjoyed little spare time in the last two years. However, I like visiting museums and exhibitions, and I enjoy sports — skiing in winter and jogging — as regularly as possible.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Hard to mention just a few, but I like everything dealing with the 18th and 19th centuries either in literature or history.

PET PEEVES: Lack of respect for others and for the environment in which we live

PHILOSOPHY: Whatever you do, do it well

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: To be recognized as the preeminent supplier of French and francophone books to libraries and to develop a range of services adapted to their evolving needs.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: In five years, I see print format maintaining its predominant role in book publishing — on the order of 80% — at least for France, because French publishing is evolving very slowly toward a model that is truly adapted to libraries. In addition, I think that if libraries are the “curators of knowledge,” paper has, up until now, proven to be the only medium that has demonstrated its longevity. As concerns library functions, vendors should be ready to respond to increasing demands for outsourcing not only for the selection of materials but also for the associated technical services such as MARC21 and RDA cataloging and shelf-ready processing. **AMALIVRE** is actively preparing for this by strengthening our teams in these areas. 🌱

into the suite of library services we offer to the campus and to broaden the number of faculty and students that benefit from the program. Our initial results in both qualitative and quantitative terms have more than met our expectations. The diversity of campus interest as evidenced in Figure 1 above is exciting and we hope to see this initial trend continue.

The ACMI provides a model built on ongoing engagement of library-led interdisciplinary teams to customize support to best meet the needs of our faculty and students. Do the collections created through the ACMI represent the future of textbooks on our campus? It’s hard to know at this point, but this initiative will help us assess how our collections are used by our community and guide us as we build collections that are integral to teaching and learning.

We look forward to continuing our work with faculty and students and to integrating this work throughout the library and across all disciplines and departments on campus. Doing so will require utilizing the full array of library staff and resources and to integrate this

initiative into the routine activities related to teaching and learning support and collection building. As more OERs are created, described, and discovered, the long-term goals of educational access and affordability become more attainable. The ACMI is a step in this direction. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **Bo-Christer Bjork and David Solomon.** March 2014. *Developing an Effective Market for Open Access Article Processing Charges*. Available Online: www.wellcome.ac.uk/stellent/groups/coporaresite@policy_communications/documents/web_document/wtp055910.pdf.
2. **Hazel M. Woodward and Helen L. Henderson.** May 2014. *Report for JISC Collections on Total Cost of Ownership Project: Data Capture and Process*. InformationPower: Available Online: <https://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/Global/News%20files%20and%20docs/IPL-Jisc-Total-Cost-of-Ownership-Data-Capture-Report.pdf>.