



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Vice President and Chief Information Officer

Impact of the Library Storage Facility

The University at Buffalo Libraries house approximately 3.3 million volumes, the largest collection of information resources in SUNY. It has been 18 years since the newest of the nine UB library units, the Health Sciences Library, was opened at UB; most of the remaining facilities including the Law Library, Lockwood Memorial Library, the Science and Engineering Library, and the Undergraduate Library are now over 25 years old. Constructed to accommodate ten years of collection growth, all of our libraries have been severely overcrowded for many years. In fact, we currently own about 75 linear miles of materials; our libraries contain only 72 linear miles of publicly-accessible shelving. As a result of our space crunch, we must house 3 linear miles of library materials in non-public storage areas. Although an increasing percentage of the information acquired by libraries is now delivered in electronic format, we anticipate continuing to receive an additional 1.0 to 1.5 linear miles of traditional paper books and journals each year for the foreseeable future. (On average, 8 books or 5 bound periodical volumes require one linear foot of shelf space.) Thus, the space problem will only get worse.

Most major university libraries in the country face the same space problem as UB. In the late 1980's Harvard University developed a remote storage model in response to the problem. By sorting material by size and then storing it on 30 foot high, closely spaced, industrial shelves, up to 1.5 million volumes can be stored in 10 thousand square feet as opposed to the 75,000 volumes that can be usefully stored on an equivalent footprint in traditional open stacks. A high-density storage facility can therefore accommodate up to 20 times the volumes per square foot that space open to the public can accommodate. Yale University has calculated that this type of storage can cost as little as one-tenth as much as traditional, on-campus library space.

In our plan, we expect to move about 1.1 million volumes, a third of our collection, into the proposed high-density storage facility. The transfer of print materials will afford us the opportunity to accommodate for collection growth for the next ten years and also redefine about 50,000 square feet in the libraries for other purposes. That represents more than 10 percent of the space (457,156 gross square feet) currently assigned to the University Libraries.

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