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# diversity equity & inclusion newsletter

## the political biologists:

### *participation of the IB department in the 2022 strike*

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Many possible variables, including life experience, family and geographical background, or historical contingency, influence if and how a person participates in collective demands (eg: civil rights movements). Workplace conditions and, in academia, traditions of thought within departments and fields are also important determining factors. Biology, as a deductive science, is nurtured by a positivist tradition for which “objectivity” entails focusing on an idea of “nature” allegedly separate from human experience. This maintains the idea that the human experience does not influence research and vice versa, creating a workplace that is often isolated from political conversations.

However, life experiences and interpretations of life influence natural scientists, as well as any other human disciplines. It is therefore not surprising to encounter very important contributions from biologists in political activism. Most documented participation of natural scientists



photo: Ian Castro



photos: Ian Castro



Participation in UAW, on and off the picket line is the outcome of various intersecting motivations.

in politics relates to topics that closely touch our own academic expertise, such as climate change, biological determinism, race, or ecological conservation. But how a group of scientists participates in a labor strike has not been analyzed. This research used an ethnographic methodology to investigate the participation of biologists from the Integrative Biology Department at the University of California Berkeley in the strike that 48,000 thousand academic workers nourished to negotiate a new collective contract with the University of California (UC) system. My participation in the strike was as an IB strike captain and two main goals guided my observations 1) to understand why IB workers participate or not and 2) to determine how IB workers participate or engage with the strike. This research observed strike events during 8 weeks: the vote for the strike authorization (pre-strike during 2 weeks), early strike (strike- weeks 1 & 2), first bargaining team (BT) contract proposal & COLA movement (strike- weeks 3 & 4), and second BT contract proposal & the raising of participative democracy (strike- week 5 & 6). I analyzed data from participant observations in picket lines and assemblies. I registered information from

informal conversations, and four formal interviews with two strike captains, one participant, and one faculty member. In addition, I analyzed WhatsApp conversations, meeting notes, and strike propaganda. It is important to note that I did not continue this research over the winter break. This way, the final strike ratification and the organization around it are not included in this analysis. Finally, my analysis was informed by previous strike experiences in Colombia as well as conversations with Latin American friends that have also participated in strikes in that region before.

## ***why were IB workers participating or not in this strike?***

### **IB Department Work Conditions**

The IB department is the less-funded STEM department at UCB with a median grad worker salary of 26K per year and a median top-up of 30K that often comes from faculty funding. Thus, the rent burden for each grad student is >60%. This constitutes a very precarious salary, making



our grad school experience full of financial stress. This burden increases the time and work that we spend finding additional funds and/or makes grad workers more dependent on familiar or partner help. This situates the IB department closer to the budget of some humanities departments that have created a group of “vulnerable” departments unwilling to settle for the UC contract proposal from December 2. Therefore, although since the beginning a very important motivation for IB to go on strike was the funding conditions, at week 4 it was clear that our standing conditions were not going to change unless we increased our internal organization to highlight the voice of the most “vulnerable departments.” However, among the students, due to different backgrounds and unequal access to funds, some individuals have better funding conditions. Some of them evaluate whether or not to participate by prioritizing individual situations over the hope of collective improvement. These students did not participate stating that “I don’t need anything else” or “I have extra funding”.

## Previous political experience

With respect to the level of engagement in the strike, life history, and previous political experience were fundamental for IB workers to commit as leaders in logistical and political tasks. Active participation in political and organizational events in the department, representatives in different committees, and previous participation in strikes—especially for international students—were crucial in determining strike organizers. Some students also highlighted that their family participation in civil rights movements was an important factor for them to be open to participate. For example, they stressed having family members that unionized, lived experiences of migration or political exile, or struggled with a lack of social and economic stability. During the first days of the strike, this “front line” of actively engaged leaders took on many organizational responsibilities. Having at least one “front line” leader in each laboratory was fundamental to transmitting information to less active strikers. *(continues next page)*



community at the picket. at far left, the author.



photo: Ian Castro



photo: Ian Castro

## how are IB workers participating or engaging in the strike?

Participation in the strike was not binary. A lot of the students decided how much to engage or how to participate according to their particular work circumstances and ideas of scientific practice. This decision responded to factors surrounding two categories: emotional tides and physical constraints. I define the emotional ties as their understanding of the ultimate purpose of a scientist (eg: service vs research) and how comfortable they felt challenging the hegemonic scientific culture. This is not exclusive to graduate students but also faculty. Below, I will characterize this emotional investment as a “passion” for science that has been historically built and reproduced in Western scientific fields. Second, I describe the physical constraints as how much responsibility a certain grad student has in maintaining the laboratory and laboratory organisms. Finally, I show how these decisions are mediated by self-discipline and by the fear of retaliation.

### “Passion” for Science as Curtailment for Demanding Rights

Although most of the IB people participate in different ways, doubts about participating or committing further, before and during the strike, were partly driven by the romantic myth of the scientist: namely a scholar that is so “passionate” about their research that they must isolate and focus in nothing but their investigation. “I’ve been told that I should be eating, sleeping, breathing science,” says a grad worker about their PI. The aspiration that scientists are not motivated by money but by passion reproduces the XIXth century naturalists’ portrait when scientists were often raised in wealthy families. Thus, most of the science conducted at that time could be called a “hobby” in the sense that it was an activity that was not tied to any **instrumental necessities**. This aged portrait is intentionally or unintentionally reproduced within biology departments, mostly by privileged scientists, who still hold hegemony within the field. Hegemonic scientific culture

often ignores, neglects, or downplays the fact that important scientists were politically active and rebelled against their hegemonic conditions. Understanding students’ welfare and collective demands as capricious or as a “lack of commitment” hinders the construction of a present and future for science where scientists come from very diverse and different backgrounds, including scientists with real material needs.

*“A lot of the students decided how much to engage or how to participate according to their particular work circumstances and ideas of scientific practice.”*

“Passion” and “sacrifice” then become facades for exploitation and discrimination, and can turn into tools that isolate scientists in training and prevent political organization. After reflecting with some students on why they were not involved in political demands, they said: “Scientific practices are made so if we don’t make an extra effort we are isolated from what is happening in the world”.

Some common scientific practices that students identified as isolating were: 1. not questioning positivism: the idea that scientists and science are observers and do not have social responsibilities or are not influenced by the social context; 2. not recognizing community services: having to decide to not to commit with the community to be successful in academia; 3. over-specialization or rejection of interdisciplinarity: no opening opportunities when a scientist need to explore new academic fields or activities, especially when they are not related with natural sciences and lean





a campus in contrast: strike demands & the Chancellor's subsidized housing.

photos at left: by the author, above: Harsh Light

toward social sciences, humanities or community services; 4. overworking and rush, expectations for research not aligned with the reality of what is achievable during working hours; and finally 5. work instability: for example, lack of guarantees to maintain a family, or in the case of postdoc, the constant necessity to look for a new job. These experiences reflect how academia prioritizes individual "sacrifice" over structural changes

### The medieval structure & collective work

Each grad student and postdoc has two employers, the university and the principal investigator (PI) or faculty that is in charge of the laboratory. Although the strike is directed at our UC contractor, our professional future and salary top-ups are managed by our PIs. In addition, and in contrast to the humanities and social sciences, natural science research is a collective endeavor that produces a network of dependencies inside a laboratory. Grad students—the apprentices—regularly conduct work that is understood as necessary in order to move up in the apprenticeship hierarchy. This structure exacerbates a medieval "master/apprentice" practice. Some faculty

even justify the lower salaries that IB graduate students receive using the medieval idea of the apprentice structure: "we grant students intellectual freedom, and other -STEM- departments are focused on churning out jobs, whereas we do training here," says a grad student quoting some faculty. The work from a graduate worker includes any work that is essential in maintaining a biology laboratory. For example, taking care of animals, plants, and other living organisms, which imposes particular restrictions and additional work in our strike participation. Feminism has defined care work as all those activities essential for the reproduction of life and nevertheless unrecognized as labor and often feminized. In science, care work is similarly considered "basic work" and assigned to apprentices in academia without deep involvement from from the upper echelons. Not surprisingly, the only academic position where women's representation is higher than men or almost equal is operations staff defined as "non-management support roles."<sup>1,2</sup> However, care work is completely tied to the principal investigator's (PI) success. Thus, there is a link between the physical maintenance of life with the desire for success and aspirations of the scientist.

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## Fear of Retaliation & Self-disciplining

As previously mentioned, for several students, the decision on how to participate in the strike depended on the labor necessary to maintain their research and laboratory (care work) and on an emotional negotiation with the idea that politics and science are antagonistic. In the strikers' testimonies, two disciplining mechanisms actively influenced the limits of their involvement. First, self-disciplining mechanisms. Students expressed feelings of guilt for having desires and interests outside the normative scope. As previously mentioned, this emotional manipulation causes a self-disciplining behavior that increases isolation. During the strike, when isolation was questioned, self-punishing thoughts appeared "I would like to do more [community work] after witnessing harassment and lack of accountability. Those things impact me as a human and impact my work. But maybe that impact is my fault because I'm not very good at compartmentalizing my feelings and just continue working as normal". Isolation, again, erodes political organization and, in consequence, an increased feeling of lack of agency to change our structural conditions.

However, self disciplining is not enough when political organization happens. Coercion strategies were also applied by both the UC system and by PIs or direct employers. The correlation between the success of a PI and a grad student is maximized in scientific disciplines. This link is not only visible through care work, but also, because other gains of the work—co-authorships, grants, and collections—are shared. This increases both the pressure to continue working and the fear of retaliation. Several IB grad students were incapable of establishing boundaries about stopping work and opted for partial strike participation: "Even if my PI says that they support the strike, they send me emails at night to ask me for lab results", "I do not want to engage—as a strike captain—because after this I will work with the same people" or "the undergrads cannot take care of the bacteria for so long, they also have finals". This double-edged situation placed IB grad workers

in a position where they feel pressure/guilty to continue working, but also pressure/guilty for participating partially in the strike.

Not submitting grades was one of the most important strategies from the workers to pressure the UC system. In response, the UC administration employed coercion techniques against faculty and graduate workers. The UC system used several strategies, for example, hiring secondary workers to grade the assignments, and threatening faculty members to halt their salaries if they did not submit grades in support of the strike, among others. Although some faculty were willing not to submit grades, the UC exercise of power also caused feelings of fear of retaliation and manipulation among faculty members. Some of them expressed that they could not afford not to receive one month of salary or that they felt in a more vulnerable position than other faculty, but mostly that they felt alone. The faculty association conducted some meetings to bring allied faculty together but the participation was very low among IB faculty members. The strike experience showed how the lack of political organization among faculty prevents them from participating collectively in political actions aiming to reorganize the UC public education system. On the other hand, IB graduate workers produced several documents to promote faculty participation and literacy in their legal guarantees. However, there was no collective response from the IB faculty but rather individual feelings or actions.

## Performative vs Participatory Democracy

Several conversations and attitudes during the strike contradicted the idea of free political participation and no retaliation language. This "performative democracy" was highlighted constantly by grad students regarding their own "supportive PIs" that asked them to work during the strike. However, there was also performative democracy among strike members. Conflict inside a strike is common and how the strike organization resolves conflict is a direct measure

below: UAW rank-and-file participate in a sit-in, fall 2022.



photo: Buddy Terry

of its democratic strength. As I mentioned in the introduction, there were several crucial moments in this strike that changed the rank-and-file level of political intervention in the negotiation process, from almost absent to fundamental for the strike consistency.

In the IB rank-and-file, during the first weeks of the strike, there was a lack of political conversation and a lack of departmental clustering. We focused

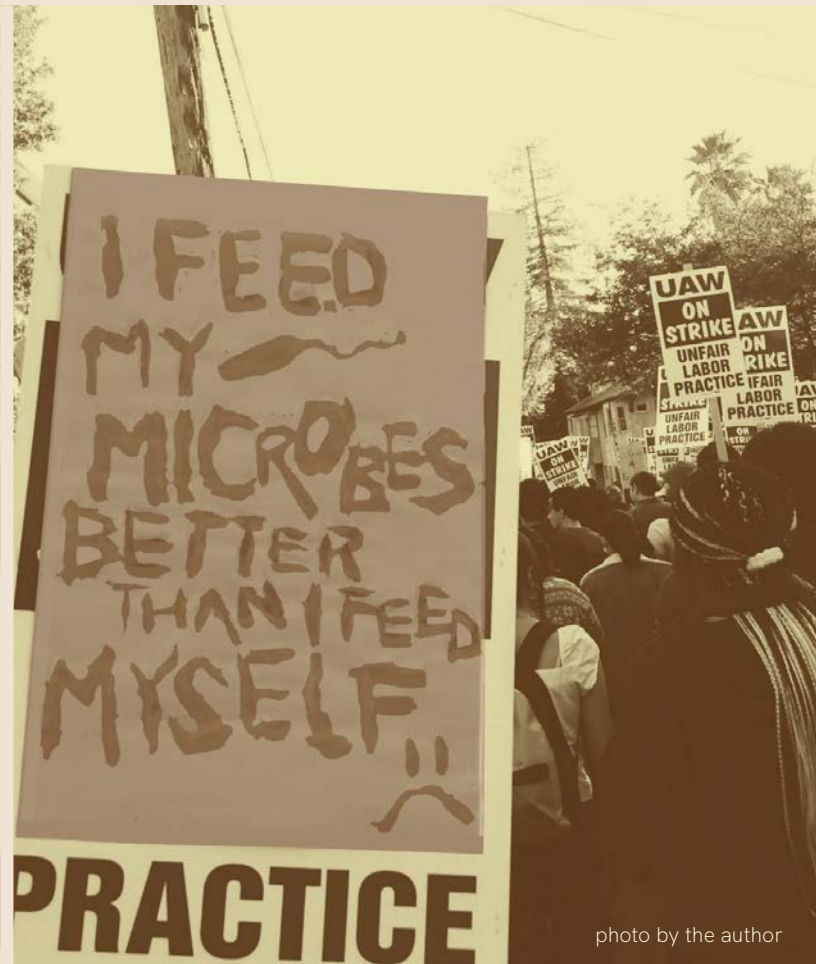
principally on maintaining a very organized and fun strike. This can be partially explained by the fact that it was the first strike for most of the union members. In the IB meeting before the strike started, people were uncertain about what to do on a picket line, “we are going to get bored” some people said. Thus, we organized **dancing classes**, rock bands, pole dancing, and pottery at the picket line among other activities. However, after the first week, BT presented the first contract proposal to be negotiated. This version changed the cost-of-living adjustment (**COLA**) considerations that were drafted by the COLA movement in 2020. With this first contract proposal, voices of disagreement arose, arguing there was a lack of democratic participation in the decision-making process. In addition, subtle silence among the strike leaders produced the curtailment of diverse voices, which I interpreted as a conscious or unconscious measure to preserve “stability,” but one that provoked a feeling of lack of transparency and union democracy. This observation was backed up by several Latin American strikers that had the same feeling of rigidity and lack of openness: “no one explained the contract or asked me anything about it, I feel like a robot” said one IB international student.

In comparison with the Latin American perspective of the strike, only homogenized and authorized actions were allowed, walking in circles, not intervening in the public space, using the same signs and not engaging the broad Berkeley community were constant conversations among international graduate workers. Even before the strike started it was clear that the strike organization was totally different from what we had experienced: “The not-to-do list in this strike, is everything that we do in a Latin American strike” said another IB colleague. Not surprisingly, in the **next IB meeting**, people demanded more direct communication with the BT, and literacy in the negotiation process. Even some IB members began participating in direct actions, including disrupting the delivery of reagents and materials for laboratory work which was fundamental to pressure the UC proposal. *(continues next page)*



Nevertheless, it was not until the fourth week, with the second BT contract proposal and the UC “final” proposal, that the need for opening spaces became completely clear inside the IB department. These two contracts proposed an increase that, even though it was “enough” for some departments, for the IB department and other low-paid departments did not solve the financial stress. The 12 months salary contract for the IB department is unreal because we conduct fieldwork and this research activity is not covered by any additional salary, so frequently we only get paid for 9 months. Also, the UC and the BT relied on departmental top-ups to argue that the final salary would be higher. However, these top-ups were different for each student and were not fixed, thus the new contract could not ensure that the same money would be offered in the future. Therefore, general discomfort and energy to continue striking until getting better conditions for the IB department brought broader attention to more IB rank-&-file and caused the opening of a **communication channel**, namely a Whatsapp group with more than 75 IB academic workers. Inside this group, several actions were organized even faster and more **democratically**

than before. A better delegation of tasks and diverse ideas that were shared more broadly made it possible to organize different actions to address departmental concerns. For example, a letter addressed to the BT to raise the field-work payment concern, a public memo stating that grad students would not participate in the new grad students recruitment process under the current conditions, and most importantly, a letter for faculty to withhold grades. The latter created tension and a sense of mistrust among faculty and between grad workers and faculty. IB grad students were never sure about which faculty withheld grades or not. In summary, these newly opened spaces for political conversation generated diverse forms of participation in the strike that were not available at the beginning. All of this increased the participative democracy from the rank-and-file and pushed the BT to hold regular town halls—by Zoom—to share and discuss the next steps for the strike. At the end of this study, the IB department was one of the departments that were striving the most to achieve the best possible contract and maintain the strike as long as it took. *(continues next page)*



IB union organizing

photo by the author



## conclusion, present and future

IB workers' strike force and decision-making were highly tied to the precarious working conditions in our department. However, the level of commitment was regularly explained by each person's previous experience in political demands and social movements. Constructed historical ideas about scientific labor has allowed exploitation, self-disciplining, and avoiding changes on the material needs of a modern scientist. Furthermore, the collective nature and the care work necessary to conduct natural sciences research create particular conditions for IB academic workers to participate in the strike. These conditions led to an increase in retaliation and a personal reflection on the impossibility of completely withholding labor. Finally, participative democracy increased with time among IB strikers as dissatisfaction with BT's and UC's proposals grew. This positive trend was not visible among IB faculty.

After this study finished, a controversial contract was ratified. IB workers were divided into different opinions and did not vote as a block. However, a community sense among IB grad workers emerged in the next steps of the negotiation process. As expected, UC administrators have not been clear about the funding responsibilities but most important they are detached on crucial discussions about the viability of precarious departments such as IB. An IB grad student post-strike survey was also conducted, backing up some of the descriptions in this study such as the mixed feelings about the current contract, increased solidarity among IB grad students, and disappointment towards faculty members and the university system at large. This survey also showed some results that were not visible during this study, for example, that, on average, graduate workers do not consider that their relationship with their own PIs was affected by the strike and that graduate students that did not participate in the strike felt alienated by pro-strike grad students.

Finally, this strike is a result of an ongoing attempt to **privatize public education** around the world.

While the focus of this particular strike was the welfare and salary of grad student workers, the responses of the UC system show that public education in the US is more precarious than ever. The UC system has chosen to prioritize maintaining the business structure of modern universities over investing in education resources. We are witnessing the closure of libraries, layoffs of lecturers, reductions in journal subscriptions, decreased admission of grad student workers, and departments being forced to solve **the financial crisis** on their own. Nevertheless, the public university, despite unceasing attacks against it, still represents a territory of resistance against inequities in access to higher education and the possibility for a more diverse group of people to participate in the creation of new values, practices, and knowledge in academia.

### Further readings links

1. Diversity and Inclusion, The National Laboratories
2. Berkeley Lab Workforce Demographics 2022

### reflection questions:

1. How have your personal experiences and background shaped your perspective and participation in political action?
2. In what ways has your engagement in civil actions or your expression of personal values impact you and those around you? Did your experience of the UAW strike in any way change how you engage with colleagues in the workplace?
3. In what ways has the UAW strike and other recent actions informed your sense of community in your lab, department, or among work colleagues?



scale model of main library complex.

## campus libraries at risk

by Gregory Arena  
PhD Candidate

The library system at the University of California, Berkeley is one of our most enduring and lauded assets. The vaulted ceilings of Doe Library frame an immense body of work, assembled and maintained by dedicated curators, librarians, archivists and researchers. UC Berkeley **libraries** are a repository for works in over 400 languages, with 13.5 million volumes and covering a combined floorspace of **12 acres**. But for the last decade this wealth has felt increasingly squandered as UC and school administrators continue to cut funding to a campus institution that has long been the prerogative of every Berkeley education. In an October 2022 article **The Daily Californian** found that for the 2022 fiscal year, “the library received \$44.5 million — \$2 million less than in the 2014-15 academic year despite the increasing cost of salaries and subscriptions and a 27% increase in student enrollment.” In fact, adjusting for inflation, UC Berkeley libraries in 2014-15 received \$17.5 million more in funding than in 2022. Most recently, this has manifest in the **announced closure** of the George and Mary Foster Anthropology Library, and reduction in

hours at 11 other campus libraries. In March, UC Berkeley library administration announced the indefinite closure and consolidation of three more libraries for 2023.

Even as libraries are faced with closures and reduced hours, online services and check-out of most digital media remain largely unimpacted. Since 1997 the University of California has continued to grow an online catalog, known as the **California Digital Library**. That’s why, for the casual users of the campus library system, the long-buried fuse that has ignited these dramatic changes in library operations have largely gone unnoticed, until recently. But not everything within UC Berkeley’s collection, or offered by a library has or can be digitized and consigned to the virtual space. While digitization can further democratize, and preserve the works shelved on campus, digitization is a compliment, not a replacement for a physical collection. The books, prints, microfilm, ephemera, and other materials housed in UC Berkeley’s libraries are tactile. These are resources which by the nature of their material construction—be that paper, binding or printing process—offer students, particularly in the field of anthropology, media

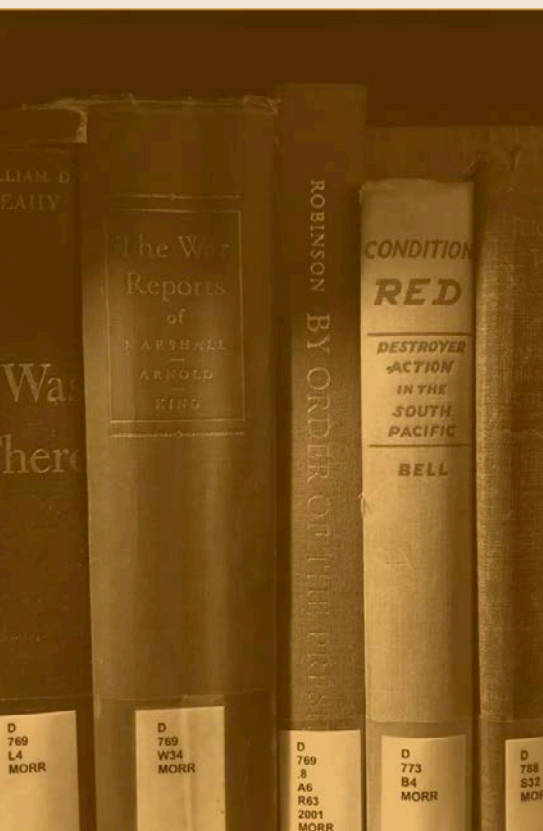


studies, history and the arts a wealth of information beyond what is simply impressed upon the page. For those in the humanities, reliance on digitized works is akin to a botanist having only scanned herbarium samples at their disposal. A useful, but by no means comprehensive resource.

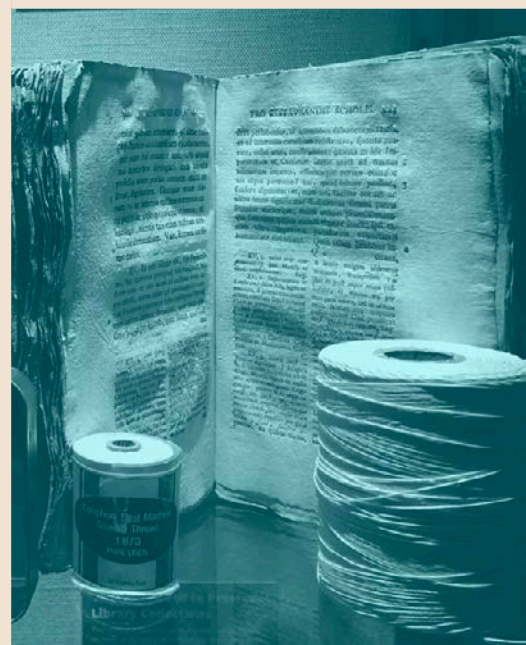
Just as with the rigor and upkeep required to maintain herbarium and museum samples, library preservation is an important and costly aspect of maintaining a collection accessed between three and four million times a year by campus patrons and the public. According to Hannah Tashjian, Head of Preservation, “the Library continues to prioritize protective maintenance of newly acquired collections, as well as repair of collections that have become damaged after use.” From their website the Berkeley Preservation Department and the UC Bindery claim to process on average 60,000 books and serials each year, though more recently, with funding shortfalls, that number of volumes has fallen to closer to 13,000 per year. Underfunding of these important services pose existential risk to a collection that has taken over 150 years to build. Tashjian speculates that “further budget cuts would be compounded by cost increases at the **UC Library Bindery** — which faces increases in supply costs of its own — and this fundamentally

reduces the amount of binding that can be done.” Everytime a book is taken off the shelf or goes to check-out it is subjected to a gauntlet of insults from being shoved in a back-pack, to spilled coffee, dog-eared pages, or mildew. For this reason, preservation and library binding practices are a necessary element in the life cycle of every physical library resource. Browse any of our campus libraries, and you will find volumes printed as far back as the 1800s, or works otherwise no longer in circulation. Preserving these fragile or unique materials from damage and wear and tear maintains the inheritance of future generations of scholars and studentry.

These budget cuts not only impact the preservation and upkeep of existing library materials, it also narrows the resources available to continue to grow our collections. Beginning this year, libraries like the Marian Koshland Library in the Valley Life Science Building will see a 19% reduction in its collections budget, or \$157,808 less per year. \$115,776 of that reduction comes in the form of the **deferred acquisition** of journals and monographs. Traditionally, 54% of the library’s annual budget is allocated to purchasing these serials and other continuing resources. That can mean that increasingly the pressure to cover the cost to access and read journal publications is placed



left: books shelved in Doe Library. right: some of the equipment used in book preservation and bindery, on display spring 2023, Doe Library.





Law Library staircases.



photo: Thomas Guignard

funding shortfalls. In an email to DEI Newsletter, **Jeff MacKie-Mason**, the University Librarian, praised the impressive fundraising efforts made by and on behalf of the Libraries, citing that in 2021-2022, “26% of [library] funding came from philanthropy. This compares with 10% from philanthropy for campus overall.” But as the roll-out of announced cuts and library closures illustrate, both funding shortages and philanthropy are not experienced evenly across all campus libraries. A keen example of this disparity can be found in the Bancroft, home to many of Berkeley’s most treasured and rare works, including archived materials ranging from Mark Twain’s **handwritten musing** on haute cuisine to the first examples of movable type. The preservation and staffing for this cherished repository are under little threat, owing to private endowments and a robust donor-pool that makes the perpetuity of the Bancroft’s collection assured.

The good fortune and savvy of the Bancroft’s operation model make it a unique case among campus library facilities. But, the Bancroft’s financial resilience is equally the unsurprising outcome of the fickle habits of philanthropy as well as donor-based decision making strategies that **blossomed** during the Chancellorship of **Nicholas B Dirk**. That the Bancroft has private donors and widespread support only highlights the precarity of all those libraries that cater to fields of study that do not have such notoriety or deep-pocketed champions. Philanthropy may be evermore vital to library operations but it is no panacea for UC budgetary woes.

on the shoulders of our students. That burden becomes a regressive imposition on students who may not have the financial resources to comfortably access materials that campus libraries can now no longer afford to provide.

Besides implementing more stringent austerity measures, UC Berkeley Library has found other ways to cope. The Library website notes that it is continually “looking to find new sources of funding through philanthropy” to resolve these

As recently as 2021, The South/Southeast Asia Library narrowly **averted dissolution**. According to the Berkeley Institute of East Asian Studies, for the last 50 years, the **library** has long been a “campus hub for multidisciplinary research and teaching...covering nineteen countries and over twenty indigenous languages.” UC Berkeley’s impressive collection of pan-Asian materials housed in two on-campus libraries represents vast resources not found at other North American and western universities.

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Libraries such as SSEAL and the Anthropology Library represent not only a critical resource to those who study in these fields, they are a hallmark of Berkeley academia and singular open-access repositories for information. Maintaining these spaces would therefore appear to be at the heart of Berkeley's public mission.

So what can explain SSEAL's near metamorphosis into more administrative office space? Put simply, the implementation of campus budget cuts exposes a funding triage that does not always value the worth of all educational services and library collections equally. In a public statement, Dr. MacKie-Mason pointed out that the library's own funding decisions are not "a result of judging any discipline as less important than any other." But niche offerings of specialized libraries make those catalogs simultaneously invaluable to anyone specialized in these fields while also often underappreciated by a broader audience. Libraries with low visibility suffer

because it can be hard to justify maintaining them as separate collections, and often hard to attract philanthropic support.

"Berkeley's fundraising is donor centric," says Dr. MacKie-Mason, "so in a given year, different areas may receive relatively different amounts of support. However, a meaningful portion of our fundraising is for use at the discretion of Library leadership, and these funds can be directed to whichever Library priorities are most in need." Taking a look at the funds generated from Berkeley's **Big Give**, in March of 2023, reveals the nuances of what MacKie-Mason describes. Overwhelmingly, we can see that donors give to the Library fund which received \$105,093 from over 230 individual donations, money that can be distributed throughout all campus libraries and library services. But looking at donations made to individual libraries paints a different picture. The sum of all donations that will go toward Bancroft collections and upkeep, for example, totaled



left : Howison  
Philosophy library,  
right : Morrison  
Reading Library





\$16,115 from 55 individual donations. In contrast, the Earth Sciences Library in McCone Hall received no donations, and SSEAL received just \$20. The Public Health Library fund received \$60.

In a written statement to DEI Newsletter, Elizabeth Dupuis, Senior Associate University Librarian outlines a **budgetary logic** that tries to grapple with meeting diverse needs with dwindling resources. “The Library aims to provide library services in the most efficient and effective way, within our budget, to serve 45,000 students and 1,600 faculty in over 350 degree programs in 130 academic departments and 80 interdisciplinary research units. Those populations, and the broader public and research communities that the Library serves, have very different needs and priorities. The Library used qualitative and quantitative data to identify patterns in user needs, such as number of visits; the number of annual check-outs; a snapshot of the academic affiliations of the people using the libraries; size of the libraries; number and types of study and user spaces; size and types of staff workspaces; and number and types of materials housed at the locations.”

Just as with the recent loss of the Education and Psychology Library, Public Health Library, and

Optometry Library, when a library is closed, its collections remain with the larger library system, folded into other existing on-campus collections. Dupuis outlines the libraries present trajectory noting that “the current budget will support no more than 10 hub libraries with a limited number of satellite libraries.” But the absorption of these collections into other libraries is to sacrifice a uniquely curated body of work and the knowledgeable library staff who catalyze engagement, discovery and use of these resources.

In **2012** there were 400 library personnel. Since then, and with the closure of multiple libraries, staffing is on track to drop by as much as 25%. Every lost or unfilled library position is the loss of a synaptic connection. Among the 27 libraries on UC Berkeley’s campus, some are barely the size of a studio apartment, others like Gardner Main Stacks are multi-storied complexes. Yet each library has been a haven for community and an opportunity for connection. In a 2021 petition that garnered over 8,000 signatures to save SSEAL, Kashi Gomez, a PhD candidate in South and Southeast Asian Studies described the library as “a home for students who are experiencing the alienation of a large university and a safe space amid increasing anti-Asian violence.”

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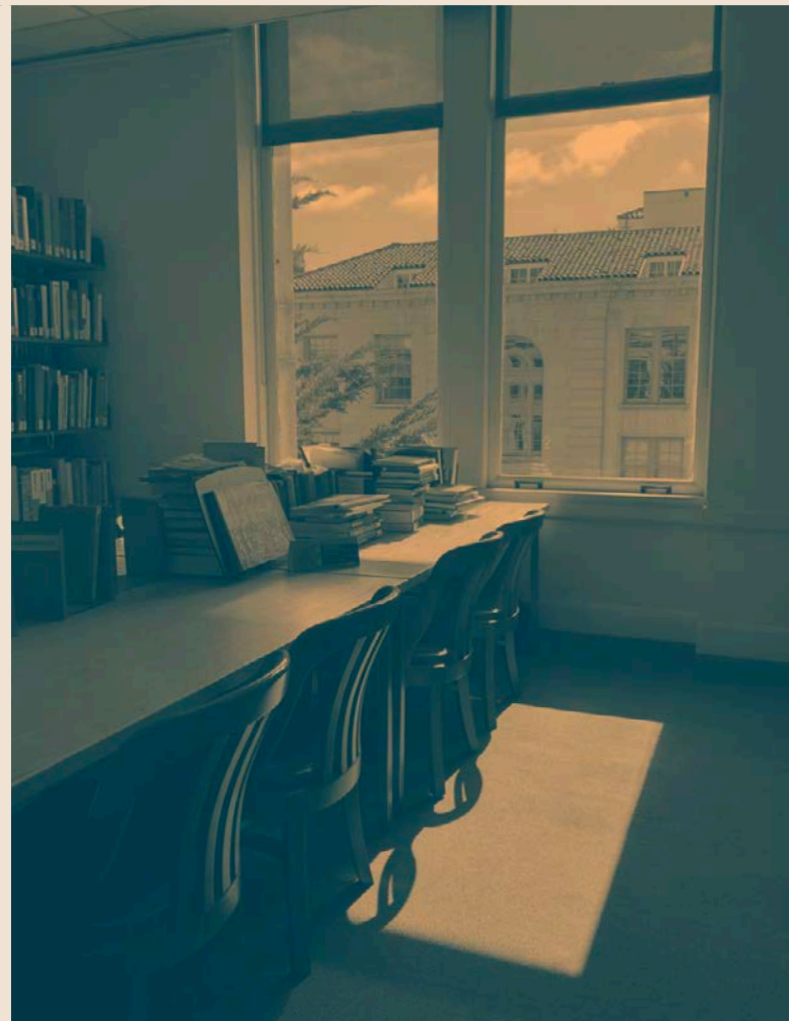
SSEAL has been more than just a place to study or access information; it has been a place for students, faculty, staff and members of the wider community to meet, interact and participate in cultural exchange.

The outcome of these funding strategies has been met with mixed response and push-back. But choosing to only appraise and critique the efforts by Dr. MacKie-Mason and his team in how they have chosen to apply or raise funds for the library, is dangerously nearsighted to a bigger picture problem within the University of California. Speaking to **The Daily Californian**, Dr. Laura Nader, professor emeritus, characterized the most recently announced round of library closure this way: "it's not a question of money, it's a question of priorities." The fact that library administrators and staff at a school with an annual operational costs of \$3.1 billion are forced into the difficult and unenviable position of needing to pick and choose between what services and libraries will continue to operate, is woefully indicative of a devaluation of library

services at higher management levels within UC Berkeley and the UC. While current library budget cuts are projected to save the university a non-trivial sum of \$1million annually, this accounts for only .03% of the schools yearly budget, raising the question of why there were not other areas the university could have targeted it's spending reduction that would have had less severe consequences on student education and services. In an **October 2022 Op-ed**, the **Berkeley Faculty Association** claimed that a 15 year trend in "defunding of the library has been an active choice by the administration who have chosen to invest in other projects." Among those other projects, BFA cites annual subsidization of the **Cal Athletics** program at \$25 million, and a total of \$230million invested by the University to make up philanthropic shortfall for the recently unveiled **Gateway Project**.

Since the announced closure of the Anthropology library there has been a surge of support among students, staff, faculty, alumni and others to protect this and other Berkeley campus libraries.

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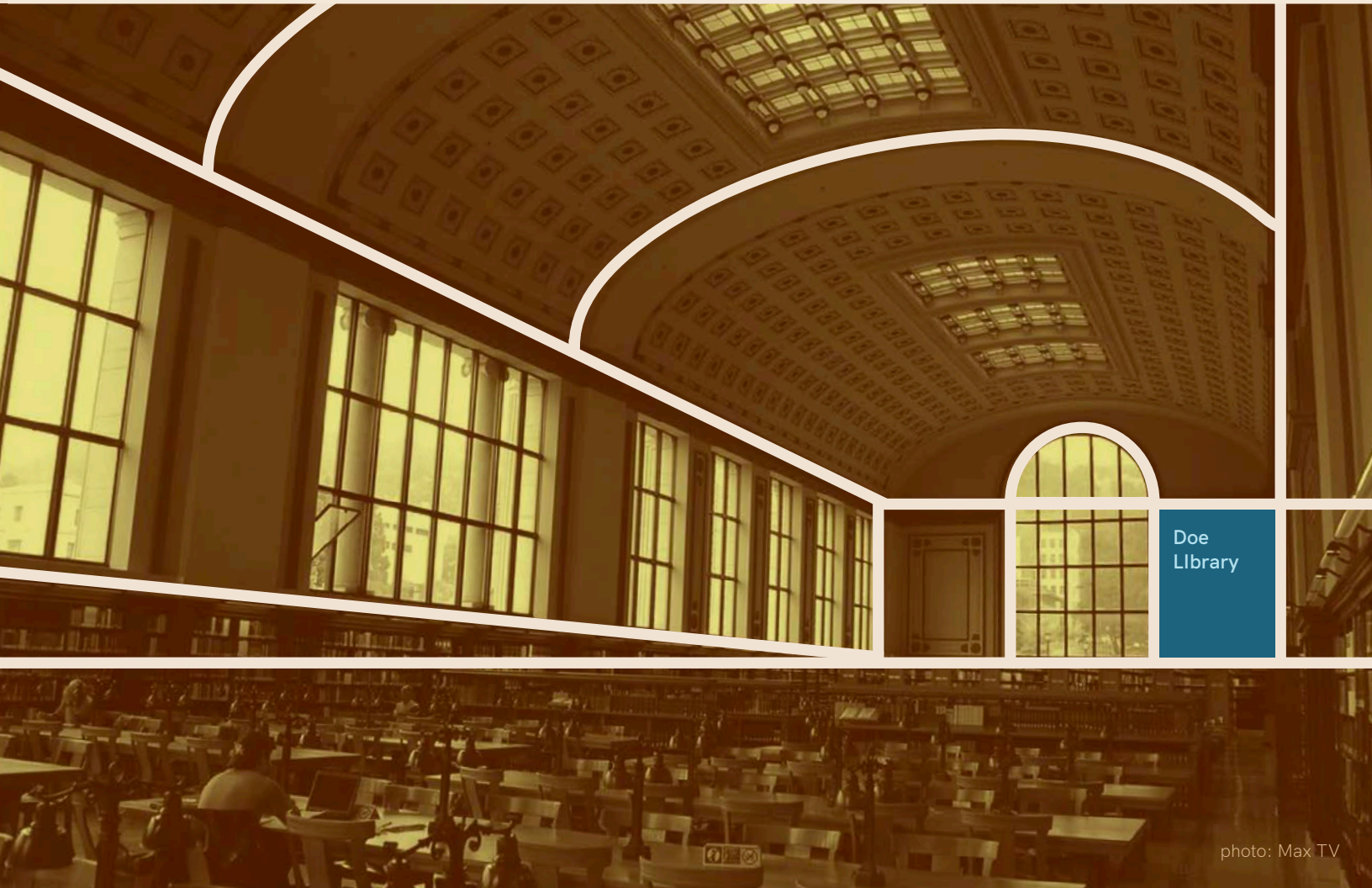
above: Bancroft Library  
right: Art History & Classics Library

As recently as **2014**, 10 campus libraries were saved from closure when faculty, college Deans and the chancellor's office committed to diverting \$6 million annually to the library system. A combination of budget reduction and philanthropy have been able to continue the function of libraries. But relying on the good will of faculty, alumni and outside support is not a sustainable model. Saving our libraries will require a reckoning at the highest levels of campus and university management about what this school represents and what is worth protecting. "I'm often asked what's my favorite place at Cal," says **Chancellor Carol Christ**. "It's the Library." Hopefully, that sentiment is one that can be more widely embraced by administrators and translated into actionable steps to maintain an institution foundational to the Berkeley education.

### reflection questions:

1. How often do you visit campus libraries or utilize library resources? How will these budget cuts affect you?
2. In what ways can you support the future of campus library services and collections?

*Special thanks to Tor Haugen, UC Berkeley Libraries Social Media Manager, for his assistance in coordinating interview responses from Library management and staff for this story.*



Doe  
Library



# STEP in the right direction

by Vici A. Villosa  
Oxford Tract Facilities

Except for when the Airbears or Eduroam connection is momentarily interrupted, our dependence on stable internet connection is something many of us rarely have to worry about. Yet corresponding with colleagues, grading or completing assignments, or combing through literature are all activities increasingly reliant on an internet connection. Beyond the minor inconvenience of spotty campus wi-fi, access to the internet off-campus can be prohibitively expensive, or even impossible in some geographic areas. And, internet use also requires access to expensive technologies. As the internet and smart devices have become integral to interaction in the modern world, these resources also become a barrier to entry for many. According to the **Pew Research Center**, only 72% of rural Americans, 68% of Black and Hispanic Americans, and 57% of American households earning less than \$30,000 per year have access to broadband internet. As an institution with roughly 37% of students Pell Grant eligible, 14% of rural origin, and with a majority non-white studentry, internet access is by no means an abstract challenge for UC Berkeley students and demonstrates the incredible potential for the emerging **Student Technology Equity Program** to serve the campus community.

More than a public health pandemic, the last three years, and how we have individually and collectively coped and responded to Covid, have been a divining rod for so many unaddressed social maladies. Covid's interruption of work, daily routines and lifestyle may have impacted everyone, however not in equal measure. In a university setting, particularly at public schools, financial aid and campus resources have historically helped to create a safety net for those most vulnerable students and employees. But when

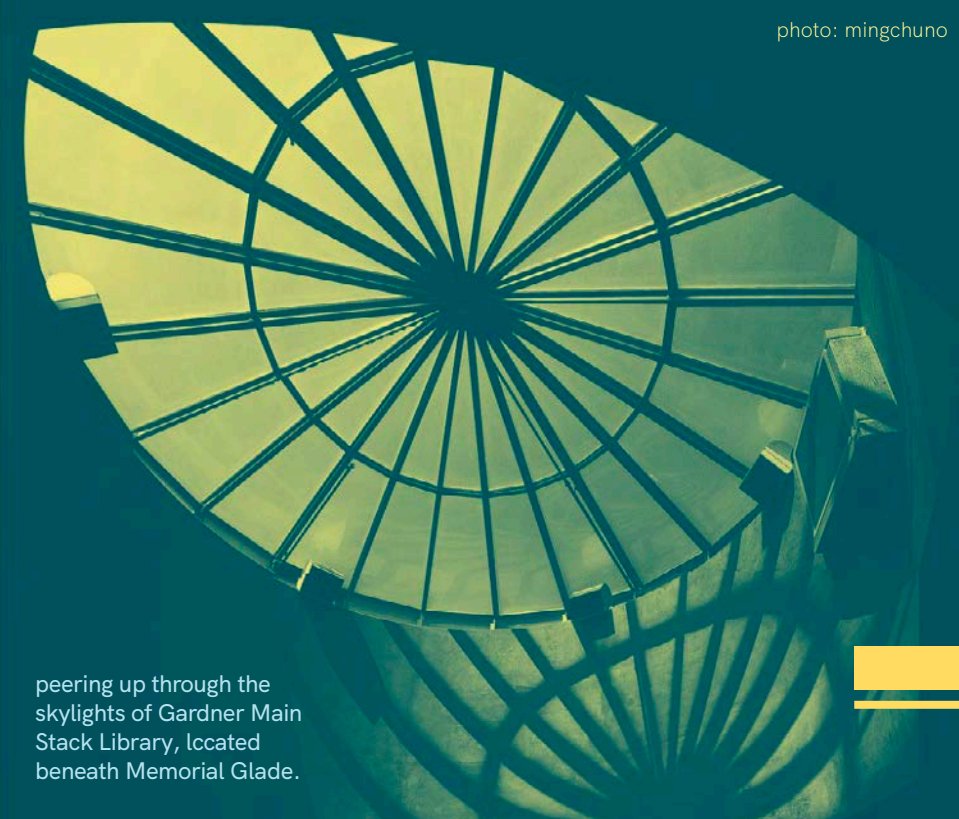


photo: Melinda Young Stuart

*"Being loaned a laptop through STEP was a lifesaver, especially when I was at a point in time where I could not afford a new device... I cannot imagine getting through my undergrad without this program."*

*—anonymous participant*

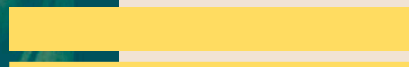
above: student make use of the Marian Koshland Bioscience & Natural Resources Library.



peering up through the skylights of Gardner Main Stack Library, located beneath Memorial Glade.

*"Not being able to afford technology often means the difference between eating and a warm place to stay, in other words, technology lands at the bottom of many students wish lists."*

*—anonymous participant*



UC Berkeley, and other schools nationwide, decided to suspend in-person instruction in March of 2020, that protection of student learning was threatened. Recognizing the impact the pandemic could have on student learning, STEP arose through a partnership between **Berkeley IT**, **Student Affairs IT** and **Student Technology Fund**. According to the STEP 2022 annual report, this program seeks to provide essential hardware to graduate, professional and undergraduate students with financial, instructional and/or COVID-19-related needs. STEP provide[s] long-term equipment loans (up to four years) by shipping devices to thousands of students, enabling them to successfully engage in their virtual coursework and other activities." Emerging from lockdown, and as campus adapts to new fiscal and structural realities, STEP continues to play a pivotal role in provisioning students and instructors with the resources they need to ensure the best educational outcomes.

Reporting by STEP indicates that of those the program serves, "78% of students have an expected family contribution (EFC) of less than \$5000" with 90% of surveyed recipients of these

services identifying that "the resources provided by STEP were essential or absolutely essential to their overall academic experience." Especially in the first few semesters during lockdown, for those who instructed online courses or interacted with students remotely, stories of students struggling to complete assignments, access web-recordings, or practice regular attendance were all commonplace. All this impacted student performance, learning outcome and grades. In the words of one recent Bioscience undergraduate, "at the start of the pandemic, I was using my personal laptop a lot more than usual, so it quickly began to have issues. Being loaned a laptop through STEP was a lifesaver, especially when I was at a point in time where I could not afford a new device...I cannot imagine getting through my undergrad without this program." But even now, as the pressure of the pandemic slowly fades and we return to in-person learning, many of these adversities persist. Many instructors increasingly rely on technology as a part of classroom engagement and use online-workbooks for homework assignments. And, some large classes on campus continue to offer remote instruction precautionarily for reasons of health and safety. *(continues next page)*



While students returning to campus have a greater guarantee of internet access through campus facilities, this is only one obstacle for student technology access. Even as the accouterments of online learning—wi-fi hotspots, webcams, microphones and headphones account for 57% of the 9,378 pieces of technology hardware allocated to students through STEP over the last two years, the remain 43% of that technology, such as tablets, iClickers, and Laptop computers are just as vital for in-person learning. At 26%, computers made the largest fraction of distributed technology, illustrating just how much desire there was among students for these types of services regardless of whether instruction was remote or in-person. Though not fully identified before the pandemic, the testimonial of one undergraduate underscores why this technology need may have not always been at the forefront of student demands and campus equity conversations: “Not being able to afford technology often means the difference between eating and a warm place to stay, in other words, technology lands at the bottom of many students wish lists.” And yet the quality of a student’s work, their engagement, and the use of their time and learning outcome is built upon the quality and limitations of technology they are working with.

UC Berkeley’s robust library system has long offered students access to desktop computers as well as some laptops on loan. Library computer and internet access hasn’t changed, begging the question why—as campus is once again, fully in-person—would there be any need for STEP, when this responsibility was historically shouldered by university libraries. Unfortunately, library desktops haven’t always provided students, especially commuters and those with irregular schedules, flexibility as to where, when, and how these students access this technology. And, as the pandemic has revealed, there is a far greater demand for these services than was previously met by libraries or UC Berkeley. But there is another reason why libraries are unable to provide for students: funding shortages continue to impact the UC Berkeley library system and the services libraries can provide. Whereas libraries have long been one way of connecting students with vital education resources, with library services and accessibility under threat, and with ever increasing reliance on technology in our education, programs like STEP now offer some resolution to these challenges students confront. However, a stable internet is not the only form of connection that needs to be compensated for as our campus libraries



left: Doe IT center  
right: Roger W Heyns Reading Room



photo: David Silver



Social Welfare Library

the equipment loaned to you, be sure to return it promptly so that the equipment you have borrowed can be provided to someone else in need. This includes following STEP's outlined return procedure to expedite their ability to process your return and minimize any burden to STEP staff. Staff, faculty or other mentors able to make computers, other hardware or labspace/lab wi-fi available to mentees or colleagues in need, can help reduce the demand for equipment that is in short supply. While STEP has been advertised in emails and other direct engagement with students, students may not always be aware of the full suite of services provided by STEP. Students may also not recognize their eligibility. That is why instructors can be an important intermediary for connecting their students with the technology those students need in order to succeed.

In 2016, the UN declared access to the internet a human right, fundamental to freedom of expression and civil and economic empowerment. Already, longstanding programs such as DSP have brought to our attention the importance of creating spaces more inclusive to all. A classroom that has an excess of distractions, or where education material is not visually or auditorily accessible is something that within our teaching culture, instructors and instructional staff are increasingly able to identify and remedy. Where the educational experience leaves the traditional classroom confines in the form of megabytes viewed on the screens of students, it is not always as easy to know how the quality of that content and learning opportunity will be received by the student. **Programs like STEP** promise to optimize student learning, by creating more equal access to education tools, and removing some of the barriers that can exist for students in pursuit of their learning.

continue to face **closure** and reduced operating hours and services.

As of the Fall 2022 semester, an Instructional Resilience and Enhancement Fee placed on all students (with remission eligible to those on financial aid) has allowed STEP to expand beyond its original two year projected life span. The IREF was instituted with the goal of both expanding who has access to this program and the longevity of the program. Direct donation to STEP is one other way community members can support this important endeavor. But, there are other ways that students, staff and faculty can promote STEP. If you are a student or instructor who has used the STEP program over the past three years and you are no longer using



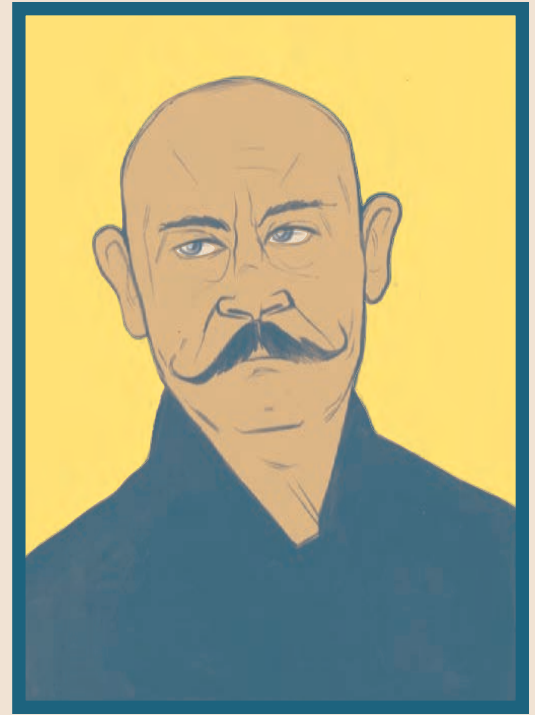
# in history: David Lance Goines

by *Sal Via-Carnosa*  
*Jepson Herbarium*

Located on the same quiet corner of Martin Luther King Jr. and Virginia since 1968, St. Hieronymus Press charts a long and at times tumultuous history of arts and culture in Berkeley and the conversation around free expression and political demonstration through visual media. On 19 February, 2023, **David Lance Goines**, printer, graphic designer and founder of St. Hieronymus passed away following complications from a stroke, age 77.

Born in 1945 to a civil engineer and calligrapher, Goines spent his youth in the Central Valley and Oakland California before attending UC Berkeley for college. Enrolled at the university between 1963 and 1964 just as the **Free Speech Movement** was getting underway, Goines found himself quickly pulled toward the center of the growing movement. Arrested on an almost weekly basis for acts of civil disobedience during the first semester of the protest, he later claimed that his arrest record would have been more impressive had he not spent so much of his time creating protest art.

For his production and distribution of what campus administration deemed to be incendiary political



materials he was expelled from UC Berkeley before the end of his sophomore year. In leaving the university, Goines dedicated himself more fully to the Free Speech Movement through the design and printing of posters, a vocation that would become his life's work. During that time he apprenticed as a pressman at Berkeley Free Press, honing his craft in offset lithography and printmaking. Over the course of that year he printed over 1.5 million leaflets, handbills and posters for the movement as well as teaching calligraphy and hand-tooled lettering to activists and protesters interested in creating political signage.

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Today on campus the “Free Speech Movement” may be a name more soon associated with cheap cups of coffee, or thrown-about as insincere shorthand for any form of Berkeley mischief. But the Berkeley Free Speech Movement represents a poignant transformation in how students and employees interface with powerful, public academic institutions. Berkeley FSM opened a way toward greater direct political and civil engagement, as well as providing more freedoms and protections for those engaged in these activities.

Protest tactics and strategies developed through the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and at other universities during this period continue to be a model for political engagement on campuses nearly six decades later. And the artistic con-naissance that Goines infused into the FSM have equally informed the arsenal of the modern **activist**. Posters Goines created throughout the late 1960’s and early 1970’s championed the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, United Farm Workers and the Anti-Vietnam War sentiments, and he collaborated with organizations and grass-roots efforts dedicated to the prevention of AIDS and venereal diseases in the 1980’s and 1990’s. This body of

work birthed a singular aesthetic and sensibility, shaping how art and print media can be employed to engender, market, and promote ideas and the political discourse of collective and citizen action.

Inspired by the work of early 20th century artists like MacIntosh, Erdt, Hiroshige and Hohlwein, the transcendent style Goines developed in his posters has become indelibly associated with Berkeley and the East Bay. His work for Chez Panisse Café, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Francisco Symphony, Berkeley Public Library and other local small businesses and public works are **immediately recognizable** and ubiquitous. His prints commemorating UC Berkeley International House, School of Optometry, and numerous works for Berkeley Pacific Film Archives have long elevated the interface between campus opportunities and the broader public.

In addition to a prolific career in communication arts, Goines instructed and lectured at UC Berkeley and the California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland. His full works are achieved through the UC **Berkeley Art Museum** and the **Oakland Museum of California**.

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## upcoming events + campus resources

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- 7 May—**Symphony in the Park**, Polish Culture Day, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco (free)
- 27-28 May—**Carnaval** Parade and Festivities, Mission District, San Francisco



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