University Library System (ULS) Unit Annual Report

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Executive Summary - Significant Accomplishments

Completion of Hillman Renovation

The renovation of Hillman Library was guided by a vision to transform it into a dynamic, user-centered hub for intellectual activity, fostering collaboration, innovation, and engagement with both traditional and digital resources in a modern and adaptable environment. Several key principles underpinned the renovation of Hillman Library at the University of Pittsburgh:

- **Enhancing User Experience:** The renovation prioritized creating a more welcoming, comfortable, and functional environment for students, faculty, and staff. This involved increasing natural light, improving wayfinding, offering diverse study spaces (individual and group), and providing comfortable and ergonomic furniture. The creation of a new, welcoming glass atrium entrance volume aimed to create a more inviting and accessible entry point, fostering a sense of community. The renovation included essential upgrades to building infrastructure, such as expanded and updated bathrooms and elevators, improved accessibility (including a new ramp entrance), and more efficient lighting and mechanical systems. This ensured the library was a functional, safe, and inclusive space for all users.
- **Integrating Technology and Supporting Digital Creation and Experiential Learning**: Recognizing the evolving needs of research and learning in the 21st century, the renovation emphasized the integration of technology throughout the library. This included enhanced Wi-Fi, ample power outlets, interactive digital displays, and the creation of specialized partnership spaces, such as the Open Lab for making and technology exploration, Text/conText, an active environment for the creation, manipulation, and/or disassembly of text as well as Media Labs for audio and video production. A central principle was the transformation from a traditional model of passive information consumption to a space that actively supports experiential learning, knowledge creation, and intellectual collaboration.
- **Highlighting Unique Collections**: The renovation centered the library's unique assets, such as the Archives & Special Collections, more prominently and made them more accessible through dedicated exhibition spaces and interactive displays. This principle emphasized the library's role in preserving and showcasing valuable research materials and encouraging intellectual exploration and discovery of these resources.

- **The Library as Gathering Place:** The library offers a range of events, workshops, author talks, research celebrations, and other programs open to all, positioning itself as a central gathering place that fosters community, facilitates knowledge exchange, and supports a diverse array of scholarly and co-curricular activities.

Open Access Publishing for the Pitt Research Community

In 2024, the ULS had Transformative Agreements with 14 scholarly publishers, including Elsevier and Wiley, the two largest publishers of Pitt scholarly articles. These agreements cover the cost of subscriptions plus open access publishing for Pitt corresponding authors. That year, there were 600 articles published under these agreements, saving nearly $2.3 million in Article Processing Charges (APCs) and increasing the visibility and impact of Pitt research around the globe. For Wiley and Elsevier publications, we brought the cost of OA publishing down to $280 per article, equivalent to an 85% discount on the average APC charge. While it is too early to fully assess the citation impact of the 2024 Pitt's open-access publications, we can measure the visibility of Pitt's OA vs. closed research. For instance, we note that Pitt's OA articles received twice as many media mentions as well as policy document mentions and three times as many mentions in academic outlets as subscription-based publications in the same year. OA articles also had a broader geographic distribution of attention (185 vs. 148 countries). Pitt researchers can find information about these agreements, check to see if their preferred journal is included, and contact us for personalized assistance via our [Free and Discounted Open Access Publishing](#) website.

Advancing Artificial Intelligence Understanding and Use in the Library and the Pitt Community

The library has actively advanced AI understanding and use on several fronts. We convened a ULS AI Working Group to develop organization-wide learning objectives, creating a shared foundational understanding of artificial intelligence. Approximately 75% of staff have participated in our voluntary, six-week online AI Essentials training sprint.

Additional foundational efforts included:

- Developing a ULS-specific AI Strategy.
- Drafting an "AI Use in the Workplace" statement to complement University guidance.
- Planning a post-training workshop focused on effectively using AI tools and microservices already available to staff.

The library continues to implement AI for handwriting recognition in our digitized collections, thereby enhancing access to handwritten archival content, including manuscripts, letters, and diaries. This process is now fully automated, enabling the AI-powered transcription and reingestion of text with minimal human intervention.

We are entering Phase II, which includes unit-level conversations about AI's role in internal workflows and expanding support and engagement with campus AI initiatives. From these discussions, a library AI roadmap will be developed, marking milestone initiatives in working with AI internally, and engagement around AI with the teaching, learning, and research activities on campus and beyond

Goals (Retrospective and Plan for Pitt Alignment)

Pillar 1: We will cultivate student success.

1.1: Develop upstream enrollment plan.

- *Continue working with local high school students, including Pitt summer programs, to introduce them to academic research:* Archives & Special Collections introduced dozens of local high school students to academic primary source research in the 2024-2025 academic year by offering custom field trip experiences, collaborative workshops, and individual research awards. A&SC ensured that over a hundred local K-12 educators had direct access to ULS digital collection materials and ULS primary source-based lesson plans through our presence at Allegheny Intermediate Unit professional development days. Also, through the August Wilson Archive's Student Award, local high school students are incentivized to conduct research with primary resources and find creative ways to share those findings with their community.

1.2: Improve access and affordability.

- *Continue to offer graduate student assistantships, paid summer internships, work for credit, and other paid student experiences:* The ULS continued to offer its SCI/ULS Alliance Fellowship and Residency, a collaborative initiative between the School of Computing and Information and the University Library System. The Residency offers candidates from diverse backgrounds and experiences who are pursuing the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree the opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on experience in a large academic library system.
  The ULS continued to offer an IT Residency for systems development projects that support the library's services and programs in open-access scholarly publishing, scholarly digital archives, scholarly communications infrastructure, and other

digital scholarship initiatives. This is a 24-month, full-time position in the ULS Information Technology Department designed to give new graduates a practical career-building opportunity that benefits both the Resident and the ULS. The Resident gains directed, hands-on experience building out ULS information systems within a mutually chosen set of specialization tracks.

- The library continued to support Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives at the University level, including direct support to recipients of the annual Nancy Tannery Grant for OER. ULS Librarian Ula Lechtenberg continued to serve as Co-Chair of the Provost's OER Standing Committee.
- The library's course reserves program continued to provide students with access to textbooks and other assigned materials. Last year, Pitt students accessed these materials nearly 15,000 times, a 30% increase from FY23.

1.3 and 1.7: Improve retention and graduation rates.

- The renovated Hillman Library features inviting spaces that accommodate various learning styles and modes of working. It offers engaging experiential learning spaces, services, and expertise, and provides opportunities for research and creative expression.
- Last year, we conducted 621 classes and workshops, attracting 10,252 participants. This corresponds to a 4% and 7% increase over FY23, respectively.
- In the past year, we provided 692 research and 107 teaching consultations, representing increases of 41% and 170% over FY23.
- Library staff created bespoke research guides for 227 (209 in FY23) courses, all of which are linked to the corresponding course in Canvas. Overall, these research guides were accessed over 1.3 million times.
- This year, the ULS launched a new team-based model for librarian liaisons and other colleagues who directly support users' research and learning. The teams are based on three main disciplinary groupings: Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM. These new disciplinary groupings improve coordination and information sharing between librarians, thereby enhancing service and support for faculty and students across all academic majors.

1.5: Ensure excellence in preparation and academic programming.

- The library facilitates experiential learning through dedicated spaces, equipment, and programs. In FY24, our Text & ConText Lab saw 1,434 visitors (a 127% increase from FY23), and the Open Lab attracted 4,621 visitors (a 21% increase from FY23).

- Our audio and video production equipment kits were borrowed 6,501 times in 2024. This is a 10% increase over the previous year.

1.8: Strengthen post-graduate success.

- *The library prepares graduate students for impactful careers through internships and fellowships centered on real-world projects:* The ULS continues to offer the SCI/ULS Alliance Fellowship and Residency Program, a collaborative initiative between the School of Computing and Information and the University Library System. The fellowship offers candidates from multiple perspectives and lived experiences who are pursuing the Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree the opportunity to gain valuable, hands-on experience in a large academic library system.

  The University of Pittsburgh University Library System (ULS) continues to offer an IT Residency for systems development projects that support the library's services and programs. This position is designed to give new graduates a practical career-building opportunity that benefits both the Resident and the ULS. The Resident gains directed, hands-on experience building out ULS information systems within a mutually chosen set of specialization tracks.

  Digital Scholarship Services (DSS) continues to offer a range of experiential learning opportunities for students at multiple levels. Graduate Student Assistants (GSAs) gain hands-on experience with the tools and methods of contemporary digital scholarship, engage in teaching activities, contribute to library-affiliated digital projects, and support faculty and students in digital research and publishing. Summer graduate interns provide operational support for DSS, mentor undergraduate interns, facilitate the "Research and Development (R&D) in the Open Lab" cohort meetings, and spend additional time on guided and independent digital project development. Undergraduate interns, participating in the R&D program—a collaboration between the University Center for Teaching and Learning and the University Library System—engage in collaborative and individual projects that build critical making skills, expose them to innovative technologies, and foster foundational digital competencies.

  The Resource Acquisitions and Discovery Pitt Partner position continues their work of assisting with description and catalog maintenance for one or more distinctive collections held by the University Library System's Archives & Special Collections, ensuring that information about these holdings in the public catalog is complete

and accurate, supporting the discovery of and access to these resources by researchers.

Archives & Special Collections (A&SC) maintains its offering of a variety of paid and for-credit opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students to gain experience in the archives profession. These positions provide exposure to a range of archival tasks, including arrangement, description, appraisal, public service, metadata creation, digital preservation, and outreach.

Pillar 2: We will propel scholarship, creativity and innovation.

2.1: Increase research.

- *Lower the cost of Open Access (OA) publishing and increase the visibility of Pitt research through open access agreements:* In 2024, ULS had [Transformative Agreements](#) with 14 scholarly publishers, including Elsevier and Wiley, the two largest publishers of Pitt scholarly articles. These agreements cover the cost of subscriptions plus open access publishing for Pitt corresponding authors. That year, there were 600 articles published under these agreements, saving nearly $2.3 million in Author Processing Charges (APCs) and increasing the visibility and impact of Pitt research around the globe. For Wiley and Elsevier publications, we brought the cost of OA publishing down to $280 per article, equivalent to an 85% discount on the average APC charge. While it is too early to fully assess the citation impact of the 2024 Pitt's open-access publications, we can measure the visibility of Pitt's OA vs. closed research. For instance, we note that Pitt's OA articles received twice as many media mentions as well as policy document mentions and three times as many mentions in academic outlets as subscription-based publications in the same year. OA articles also had a broader geographic distribution of attention (185 vs. 148 countries).

- *Provide access to top research collections through purchase and resource sharing:* The ULS provides access to an extensive array of research and teaching resources comprising nearly 6.5 million unique titles. In the last financial year, we spent just under $12 million acquiring new materials and renewing our subscriptions, including new support for Transformative Agreements. When materials are not available locally, we source them from other research libraries around the globe. In FY24, we filled nearly 7,000 requests from the Pitt community. Additionally, our membership in Hathi Trust enables us to access scholarly content formatted for use with adaptive technologies, part of a broader initiative to ensure barrier-free access to research materials.

- *Support undergraduate research through programs like the Archival Scholars Research Awards program*: In its 10th year, the Archival Scholars Research Award (ASRA) continues to offer undergraduate students the opportunity to develop their research skills by utilizing the archival and rare collections held by the ULS. Students received individual support from a librarian or archivist mentor, as well as an academic faculty mentor, as they pursued a self-generated research question and gained transferable skills in close reading, critical thinking, and a new awareness of the value of working with primary resources.
- The renovated Hillman Library features a large-scale digital interactive wall, called "Pitt Research Matters," designed to showcase the research conducted at the University. Library staff will work with faculty, graduate, and undergraduate scholars to translate their research into an engaging visual format with a supporting narrative that is understandable to a general audience. This service will provide additional exposure for Pitt research and will provide researchers with an opportunity to communicate the impact of Pitt research to the general public.
- Over the 2024-2025 academic year, Archives & Special Collections provided opportunities for approximately 27 students to curate exhibits featuring unique and distinctive library collection materials in our Hillman Library Archives & Special Collections Gallery. A&SC staff facilitated this through one-on-one research support and mentorship with students. They also collaborated with teaching faculty to embed exhibit creation into class assignments. This is illustrated in a Fall 2024 Studio Arts course centered on archives and visual arts, which resulted in an exhibit of student work inspired by our collections.
- *Provide funding to support research activities:* The August Wilson Archive, thanks to external grant funding, has supported four different types of research awards for researchers. Local students, teachers, and artists have been financially supported to conduct research within the August Wilson Archive and have shared their findings with the community, thanks to further funds specifically sponsoring their work and exhibitions. Out-of-town researchers were also financially supported by covering travel, lodging, and food expenses. Several awards were available for research in other archival collections, including the Erroll Garner Archive, the Dick Thornburgh Archive, and many others.
- The ULS Internal Grant Program is a pilot initiative offering three or more grants of up to $5,000 for library faculty or staff-led projects. Designed to foster a culture of grant-seeking, it aims to support professional development in grant writing, budgeting, and project management by closely mirroring external grant processes. The program encourages innovation, collaboration, and capacity building for future funding opportunities while advancing the ULS's mission and strategic goals

through support for impactful projects that may not otherwise receive funding. This was the first year of competition for the internal grants, and three projects were awarded funding.

2.3: Promote innovation and tech transfer/commercialization.

- The ULS offers a Business Research Clinic (BRC), providing one-on-one confidential business research assistance to help entrepreneurs gather information about their customers, competition, and industry to better understand the opportunities and limitations of their business idea. The BRC is free of charge and open to Pitt affiliates and the public. This past year, we assisted close to fifty individuals. The BRC helps entrepreneurs:
  - Map out competitors, partners, and suppliers
  - Gather consumer demographics
  - Track trends, attitudes, and behaviors
  - Determine market size, demand, and/or market segments
  - Identify industry opportunities, challenges, and outlook

  The Business Research Clinic offers one-on-one appointments in collaboration with multiple partners, including the Pitt Small Business Development Center, the Innovation Institute's NSF-I Corps program, the Big Idea Center, and the Homewood Community Engagement Center. Appointments are also arranged through entrepreneurship courses and individual referrals from faculty, EIRs (Entrepreneurs-in-Residence), Carnegie Libraries, and external economic development organizations, such as the Riverside Center for Innovation/BizFit.

- *Offer market and industry analysis to the Office of the Provost as new programs are explored:* In collaboration with the Office of the Provost, the ULS offers a market analysis service for academic units proposing new degrees, certificates, and programs. Units researching the viability of new academic offerings must examine existing offerings from other institutions, the demographics of potential student populations, and employer needs and trends within specific geographic areas. The ULS supports these information needs by subscribing to an educational analytics platform called Lightcast. Lightcast aggregates data from the US government's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and combines it with other relevant data, such as labor market characteristics. The library's expertise in the research process is key to this service, particularly in helping administrators translate information needs into systematic queries and working through multiple

data formats to produce standard reports. This past year, the library provided seven new reports to help inform decision-making for programs being considered in Business, Medicine, Social Work, and others.

2.5: Amplify the arts, humanities, social sciences, and professions.

- *Support creative activities through dedicated spaces and services, including library spaces on the Pittsburgh campus for Fine Arts and Music, with specialized collections, user spaces, and expert staff:* The Finney Music Library launched a new informal music performance series this spring, "Fridays at Finney." The events featured weekly lunchtime concerts showcasing Pitt students and their faculty instructors. At each performance, Chris Lynch, Head of the Music Library, also presented selected collection items related to the music being performed. The series will continue in the fall of 2025.

- This past year, Hillman Library hosted a variety of programs that strengthened partnerships with and provided support to Pitt departments, showcased the important holdings of ULS to the Pitt and local communities, and featured artwork and exhibit displays that amplified local voices. Examples include:
  - Partnering with the August Wilson Society for their biennial colloquium, which saw national researchers gather to discuss research on and creative expression through August Wilson's work and highlighted the ULS's August Wilson Archive.
  - Hosting Italian director Renzo Carbonera to talk about his process of conducting research using our archival material and translating the material with the European Studies Center to produce the first-ever Italian production of an August Wilson play.
  - Partnering with the Frances Hesselbein Leadership Institute for two programs – a private screening of a documentary on Frances Hesselbein that featured ULS archival material, and a Frances Hesselbein Lecture Series speaker on non-profit leadership.
  - Hosting a discussion with Frank Hightower Jr. about his then-recently acquired photographic collection that provides a visual representation of the African American community in Pittsburgh over eight decades.
  - Continuing to program an "Archival Scholars in Conversation" event to provide an opportunity for student researchers to talk about their research using the University Library System's archival, rare, or special collections.
  - Exhibiting a selection of artwork submissions from the "Envisioning a Just Pittsburgh" initiative that featured artwork that expands diversity consciousness and celebrates intersectional perspectives and cultures.

- o Awarding and exhibiting a selection of Studio Arts student artwork for the annual A.J. Schneider Awards.
- o Displaying a mural created by the Spreading Neurodiversity Acceptance Project (SNAP).
- o Featuring several pieces of artwork created by local artists and students as part of the August Wilson Archive Artist Scholar Award.

Pillar 3: We will be welcoming and engaged.

3.1: Represent the communities we serve and expand opportunities.

- *Grow archives and special collections with significant regional community impact:* A&SC's efforts to acquire the archive of legendary local jazz artists, such as Ahmad Jamal, are one way we are reaching the community and drawing them into our collections. Other significant recent collection acquisitions with local ties include the papers of Jean Bryant (news columnist and founder Miss Black Teenage Pageant), Bill Strickland (founder/CEO Manchester Craftsman's Guild), Sharon Flake (award-winning children's author), and Jim Roddey (first County Executive), the organizational records of the Allegheny Trail Alliance (GAP trail), and the Guild Photography archive.
- Archives & Special Collections developed and facilitated over twenty high-impact programs to engage broad audiences with our collections. We held these programs both on campus and in community spaces to meet community members where they are. For example, A&SC staff shared the archive of jazz musician and Pittsburgh-native Ahmad Jamal with the Hill District and Homewood communities, with collaborative programs held at each neighborhood's Community Engagement Centers. Plus, the August Wilson Archive's pop-up display and research day were featured during Pitt's Center for Urban Education Summer Educators' Forum. This collaboration and others highlighted the work of the CUE Fellows in the August Wilson Archive, demonstrated the value and importance of cross-department interactions, and expanded the reach of the A&SC to other communities thanks to CUE's exposure.

3.2: Cultivate belonging and a welcoming culture.

- The renovated Hillman Library is a space that welcomes faculty, staff, and students from various disciplines and at different stages of their academic and professional careers. The library is outfitted with furniture and spaces to accommodate multiple learning styles, and partners with numerous campus

entities to provide services and support. It offers cross-disciplinary programming to appeal to a broad range of people and perspectives.

- We continued our Spotlight Collections program which features selected materials from our general collections, focusing on topics of current discourse and celebrating our communities. For instance, our current spotlight collections explore the roles, contributions, and experiences of women within global education systems and international academic environments, highlight selection from our jazz collections, and explores ways that work and working of all kinds – free and unfree, skilled, and unskilled, vocational, and voluntary – intersect with the collective experiences of Black people. These collections are available on the first and second floors of Hillman and, over the Summer, will expand to the newly reopened ground floor. Spotlights on cybersecurity and data visualization are planned for the fall.
- *Promote awareness and use of Life Solutions services*: Life Solutions is a valuable resource and employee benefit at the University of Pittsburgh, offering support for personal and professional well-being. To ensure colleagues are familiar with their offerings and feel empowered to reach out when needed, the ULS regularly hosted workshops focused on health, wellness, and workplace success. These sessions consistently received strong participation, averaging 20–30 attendees, and brought together staff from all ULS libraries and campuses. Colleagues appreciated the opportunity to connect, engage with relevant topics, and gain practical insights to enhance both their work and personal lives.

3.3: Be an Employer of Choice.

- The ULS successfully recruited five new faculty librarians with expertise in digital preservation, fine arts, scholarly communications, research data, and engineering. Additionally, nine staff members were hired to advance ULS initiatives in communications, the East Asian Library, electronic resources, Archives & Special Collections, Information Technology, public services, and scholarly publishing.
- To support a strong start for all new hires, ULS revised and enhanced its onboarding documentation to align with the Office of Human Resources and create a more welcoming experience. The updated onboarding checklists assist managers in introducing new employees to colleagues and equipping them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed and thrive in their roles.

3.4: Increase Engagement Across the Communities We Serve.

- The ULS strengthened community engagement and fostered a sense of belonging through inclusive programming, speaker events, fellowships, and collaborations. Highlights include the recruitment of the 2024–2025 ULS/SCI Alliance Fellow and the residency of the 2023-2024 Fellow in Archives & Special Collections. Invited speakers Branden Ballard and Kai Alexis Smith addressed themes of community convergence and inclusive practices, followed by small group discussions hosted by the ULS Diversity Committee. Programming highlights included events recognizing Indigenous, Latinx & Hispanic, Asian, and Black History Months, as well as cohosting a book talk with the Asian Student Alliance. Collaborations with the Community Engagement Centers brought educational programming to the Hill District and Homewood, including events about the Ahmad Jamal jazz archive. Additional efforts included support for the Faces of Diversity series and curated collections highlighting the cultural contributions of the Black diaspora.

- *Utilize creative communication tools to promote new collections and invite the Pitt and Pittsburgh communities to participate in ULS events.* The library employs a multichannel approach to communicate with campus and community constituencies. Library staff embedded in university departments act as communication channels, and programming via the Community Engagement Centers helps extend our reach into Pittsburgh communities. The library publishes several general-interest and subject-specific newsletters, which have a combined reach of over 4,000 subscribers. The Library Insider, the library's monthly general-interest newsletter, achieves a 41.92% open rate and a 12.5% click-through rate, exceeding industry averages of 37.7% and 3.2%, respectively, reflecting strong audience interest. Within the library itself, three large-scale digital walls display library programs and events, Pitt research outputs, and student engagement with unique library materials in a striking and engaging format.

- *Offer opportunities for artists to reuse archives and special collections in creative ways:* Within the Archives & Special Collections, the August Wilson Archive has supported the work of more than 20 local creatives. Artists from diverse backgrounds, ages, and working with various media have contributed to honoring and advancing the legacy of August Wilson by conducting research in the August Wilson Archive and using those findings as inspiration for their work. The August Wilson Archive has inspired and sponsored new work in a range of artistic media, including soundscapes, collages, paintings, plays, dance classes, and fashion design. Student artists have also been captivated by the archival materials, making poetry, new plays, paintings, informative exhibits, and short videos.

- *Continue to pursue a partnership with the Latin American Cultural Center for the exchange of exhibits:* The Director of the University Library System and the Librarian for Latin American Studies are in discussion with the Latin American Cultural Center (LACC) to consider areas of collaboration. This collaboration would enable students and faculty to engage with diverse artistic and historical collections, while providing the LACC with new audiences and scholarly insights. The participants agreed to reconvene once the renovation is complete to implement the initiatives.

3.5: Expand global engagement.

- *Acquire, preserve, and provide access to archives and special collections of national and international significance:* A&SC has an active acquisitions culture that tracks opportunities across auctions, booksellers, and donors to strengthen the archival and rare holdings at the ULS. Some highlights from this past year include archival papers from the producers of the influential horror film The Blair Witch Project and the archives of Stanley Wiater, a freelance writer and journalist who, over nearly 50 years, interviewed all the major names in literary and cinematic horror. A&SC also purchased a rare Nuremberg Chronicle, published in 1493, which is the first printed illustrated encyclopedia of world historical accounts; this is arguably one of the most essential titles in book history.
- *Digitize archives and special collections, with most digitized content freely available to a worldwide audience*: Newly digitized materials from several major collecting areas are now accessible through [ULS Digital Collections](#), joining the two million-plus objects currently available. These new materials include the entirety of jazz composer Sam Rivers' scores, behind-the-scenes photographs from George A. Romero's film *Night of the Living Dead*, and more than 800 postcards from Latin American countries dating from the early twentieth century. Other highlights include images from Pittsburgh photographer and playwright Frank Floyd Hightower, a contemporary of August Wilson, photographs documenting 50 years of theatrical performances at the Pittsburgh Public Theater, and issues of the Nationality Rooms newsletters in support of the upcoming anniversary. Digitized content from the Center for American Music, Theodore M. Finney Music Library, and Archives & Special Collections is now available through a curated digital site, [American Music at Pitt](#), to provide patrons with additional context and discovery options for these special collections materials. Two external grant awards from CLIR enabled us to reformat and make available the entirety of our oral history interviews that pertain to Southern Blacks', Slovak, Irish, and Polish migration to Pittsburgh, ethnic fraternal organizations, and Black political figures who impacted regional politics. We also

released a new website dedicated to accessing distinctive materials held by the ULS that pertain to American music composers, organizations, and performances.

- *Provide worldwide open access to the research, scholarship, and creative output of Pitt students and faculty through the D-Scholarship@Pitt institutional repository*: [D-Scholarship@Pitt](#) is the institutional repository for the research output of the University of Pittsburgh. As an Open platform, it is designed to increase the discovery of Pitt research by allowing indexing by Google and other major Internet search engines, as well as PITTCat+, the online library catalog of the University of Pittsburgh. Materials are author-submitted and include:
    - Research papers, published or unpublished
    - Conference papers and presentations
    - Supporting multimedia (audio, video, images, etc.)
    - Research data
    - Software/code
    - Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs)

    Over this past year, we have been migrating the institutional repository (D-Scholarship) to a new platform, Hyku, with a go-live expected this summer. This new platform is modern, open-source, and cloud-hosted, and will offer improved user experience, security, and extensibility.

- *Participate in the development and governance of global open platforms:* The ULS is actively involved in multiple international open infrastructure projects, contributing through direct software development, and in organizational governance. These projects are inter-organizational collaborations that bring together various universities, libraries, commercial vendors, and non-profit organizations. Our participation is driven by locally identified needs at Pitt, which align with work others are already doing together to solve those needs. By joining in with these efforts, we share our costs and risks with a broader community, and we help to shape and prioritize collective development. Some current projects include:
    - AI handwriting text recognition for shorthand: As a member of READ-COOP, SCE, we are investigating the use of our philosophy of science archives to train the Transkribus tool to recognize the Stolze-Schrey writing system, which will make accessible the original handwritten notes of formative German philosophical manuscripts in our collections and beyond.
    - Feature development for digital archives: As participants in the Islandora Foundation, we are helping to shape the direction of this repository platform, both in governance and software development. Our active development

projects include integration with leading collections management and request systems for discovery and access, streaming audio/video integration, and content syndication.

- Feature development for author self-archiving repositories: As a member of the regional PALCI network, we coordinate, fund, and validate new features of interest to us and the network. These include institutional single sign-on, analytics and usage reporting, and third-party deposit integrations.
- Community plugin maintenance for electronic journal publishing: As a collaborator with the Public Knowledge Project, we maintain plugins supporting the security, accessibility, and functionality of the software.

Each of these relationships represents work in support of the University of Pittsburgh's global reach, as we, together with a worldwide community, develop software used by universities, libraries, museums, and other organizations worldwide.

- *Expand international agreements/exchanges and continue to pursue international project work:* The library collaborated with the National Chung Hsing University to host international graduate interns at the University of Pittsburgh's Library System (ULS). Four graduate students studying library, information science, and data science visited the ULS in July 2024 to observe the daily operations of the East Asian Library (EAL), including research consultations, reference services, and collection management. Students participated in EAL archival and special collections cataloging and archival processing, and had the opportunity to tour the various libraries and departments of the ULS.
  - The collaboration with Keila Grinberg (CLAS) on Afro-Brazilian oral history digitization continues with fruitful discussions with her and partners in Brazil, but because of the temporary pause on hiring a Pitt GSA, the project is on hiatus.
  - The collaborative project on digitizing archives related to the East African slave trade, housed at St. Paul's University in Kenya, continued with preparations for a grant application, an in-person visit from the St. Paul's University Librarian to the ULS Digitization Lab, and preparations for the ULS to house two Kenyan librarians for training in digitization and metadata next year.
  - Rudolf Carnap (1891-1970) was a central philosopher in the Logical Empiricist tradition who had a foundational role in today's Anglo-American analytic philosophy. His papers were acquired by the University of Pittsburgh in 1974, starting a long tradition of collecting philosophical papers now

comprising the Archives of Scientific Philosophy. The library has scanned about half of his corpus and is making plans in collaboration with a German institution to continue that work. However, researchers are often at a loss when they encounter his frequently used shorthand script. Carnap employed the Stolze-Schrey system, now known by only a few of an older generation and the occasional intrepid archivist or scholar. The ULS is undertaking a project, using scans of Carnap's shorthand texts and high-quality existing transcriptions as training data, to teach an AI to read and transcribe the shorthand system to Latin script. The result will be a publicly available transcription tool that can be applied to any of Carnap's manuscripts written in this shorthand. The AI model will also help transcribe other manuscripts using this script, on any other subject, even if unrelated to Carnap.

Pillar 4: We will promote accountability and trust.

4.2: Optimize physical and digital infrastructure.

- •The renovated Hillman Library is a space that welcomes faculty, staff, and students from various disciplines and at different stages of their academic and professional careers. The library is outfitted with furniture and spaces to accommodate multiple learning styles, and partners with numerous campus entities to provide services and support. The library now features ample power and robust network, state-of-the-art infrastructure, ADA compliance and LEED certification, an abundance of natural light, experiential learning, media, and making spaces.

- *Upgraded digital archival materials platform and institutional and subject repository platforms:* Islandora powers our high-profile online archival collections such as ULS Digital Collections, Historic Pittsburgh, and Documenting Pitt—critical teaching, research, and public engagement assets. With the current platform at end-of-life, we launched a migration to a new version that improves usability, accessibility, scalability, and integration. We also continue to build system integrations (e.g., Islandora to Preservica for digital preservation) that expand overall functionality. In parallel, the institutional repository (D-Scholarship) migration to Hyku is nearly complete, with a go-live expected this summer. Both platforms, modern, open-source, and cloud-hosted, will offer improved user experience, security, and efficiency.

- *Preserve and ensure long-term access to archival electronic records*: Archives & Special Collections have successfully transferred, processed, and ingested archival digital assets from varied and significant born-digital and hybrid archival collections into complete, long-term digital preservation, including the first entirely born-digital collection of Pitt Chancellor's Records, i.e. those of Chancellor Gallagher. We have

established and implemented a new digital processing workflow that complements, supports, and expands our Digital Preservation Strategy. This work now allows us to offer access to 1.4 million digital archival assets, discoverable via finding aids and made available online upon request. A&SC, along with ULS Systems Development and the Metadata and Discovery Unit, dedicated significant time and resources during the past year to upgrade the digital collections platform used to host digitized content from the archives and to plan for the migration of over 2 million existing digital objects. This work, still underway, will ensure continued access and technical support for digital collections.

- *Build relationships with organizations and individuals to cultivate the donation of special materials. As a result of partnering with the Bulgarian Macedonian National Educational and Cultural Center (BMNECC) to host welcoming receptions related to our grant from the NEH, the ULS was invited to consider acquiring the organization's records. This effort* concluded in early 2025. Additionally, personal relationships were established with family members of the late Ahmad Jamal, resulting in the donation of his jazz archive to the ULS in 2024. Our work to create a Horror Studies Collection caught the attention of the writers, producers, and director of The Blair Witch Project, who donated the archive of a film that genuinely changed the horror genre.

- *Advance Artificial Intelligence Understanding and Use:* A ULS AI Working Group was convened. The team led the development of organization-wide learning objectives aimed at creating a shared foundational understanding of artificial intelligence. Approximately 75% of staff participated in our voluntary, six-week online training sprint. Additional foundational efforts included:
  - Developing a ULS-specific AI Strategy.
  - Drafting an "AI Use in the Workplace" statement to complement University guidance.
  - Planning a post-training workshop to focus on effectively utilizing AI tools and microservices already available to staff.

In this next post-training phase, we will convene unit-level conversations about AI's role in both internal workflows and those of our academic partners and develop strategic initiatives to advance these objectives.

The library remains actively engaged with campus-wide AI initiatives, including monthly meetings with the PASTA (Pitt Alliance of Scholars and Teachers Around AI) group. The ULS AI Steering Committee meets monthly with the Center for Teaching and Learning, and we maintain regular contact with Pitt IT on AI-related infrastructure and tools.

In our digital collections work, the library continues to implement AI for handwriting recognition, enhancing access to handwritten archival content such as manuscripts, letters, and diaries. Building on this, ULS IT developed infrastructure in Islandora to support fully automated transcription services, enabling background ingestion of text with minimal human intervention. We are now evaluating AI tools for automatic tagging and ALT text creation using the same infrastructure layered services model that extends AI capabilities without duplicating effort.

- Our new general collections development policy incorporates annual assessments of our acquisition profiles to better reflect current research and teaching priorities of the university. We also review our subscription renewals based on usage and cost to ensure responsible resource allocation. A new annual process for transferring less-used print materials from all ULS libraries to our Thomas Blvd. facility was implemented last year, freeing up space for student learning and group work. These materials remain accessible within 24 hours of request.

4.4: Ensure Safety.

- *Coordinate with Pitt Police and other relevant parties to ensure that library facilities provide a safe environment for students and other visitors, and that appropriate plans are in place to address safety incidents:* The ULS hosted Pitt Police trainers this year for workshops on de-escalating conflict. Further, ULS closely coordinated with Pitt Police and Student Affairs when students conducted protest events in Hillman Library in December 2024.

4.5: Amplify our story.

- *Maintain exhibits and outreach programming, particularly related to archives and special collections:* Over the 2024-2025 academic year, Archives & Special Collections has overseen the programming of approximately 13 physical and digital interactive wall exhibits in the Hillman Library Archives & Special Collections Exhibit Gallery. Exhibit topics range from horror studies, performing arts, the history of dolls, and proto-graphic novels to bookmaking in China and Japan and the history of Grimm's fairy tales. Featured exhibit curators include teaching faculty members in the Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences, undergraduate and graduate students at Pitt, staff in units such as the College of General Studies, and ULS faculty and staff. We have held a number of exhibit-related outreach programs so far this year, including gallery talks, panel discussions, and a combination exhibit talk and hands-on workshop in the Text & conText Lab.

- This past year, the library onboarded a new Library Impact Communicator, who has revitalized our outreach through:
    - Restarting social media presence.
    - Increasing the Library Insider library general interest newsletter frequency from quarterly to monthly.
    - Systematically capturing and amplifying stories of library impact from staff, faculty, and students.
    - Expanding event coverage.
    - Increased pitching of stories to news outlets.

- This year, the ULS launched a new team-based format for librarian liaisons and other library colleagues who directly support users' research and learning. These individuals act as important channels for communication about library spaces, services, programs, and expertise to departments, as well as helping to inform library decision-making by bringing the perspectives of the departments they represent to bear. The teams are based on three main disciplinary groupings: Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, and STEM. These new disciplinary groups improve coordination and information sharing between librarians, improving service and support for faculty and students in all academic majors.
- *Increase successful grant applications:* This year, the library was awarded $54,880 in external grant funding.
- *Contribute to the relaunch of the University's Faculty Information System (Elements)*: ULS representatives contributed to a cross-campus effort to relaunch Elements, the University's Faculty Information System, which will enable Pitt researchers to create public profiles showcasing their research and scholarly activities. The first phase of relaunch focuses on updates to the core platform; a newly launched second phase will focus on outreach, engagement, and ongoing governance of the platform.
- *Launch a large interactive digital wall in Hillman Library in 2025 that highlights the research and creative outputs of the University:* The renovated Hillman Library features a large-scale digital interactive wall, called "Pitt Research Matters," designed to showcase the research conducted at the University. Library staff will work with faculty, graduate, and undergraduate scholars to translate their research into an engaging visual format with a supporting narrative that is understandable to a general audience. This service will provide additional exposure for Pitt research and offer researchers an opportunity to communicate the impact of their work to the general public.

4.6: Promote the free exchange of ideas.

- *Serve as a gathering space for faculty, students, and staff for intellectual debates and programs:* This past year, the library had 1,023 events and programs with 19,680 participants. (an increase of 11% over last year).
- *Serve as an Open Access publisher for over 40 peer-reviewed scholarly journals:* The library continues our Open Access E-Journal publishing program. This year, we brought three new Pitt-related journals into our program. Two of these journals, focused on Mathematics and Sociology, respectively, are operated by undergraduates and publish their research. Also, this year, the library onboarded a new Library Publishing Specialist who will work closely with the incoming Scholarly Publishing Librarian, the rest of the Digital Scholarship Services team, and Library Information Technology colleagues to support the ULS E-Journal Publishing Program and other publishing initiatives.

Pillar 5: It's Possible at Pitt.

5.4: Cultivate a Digital Future.

- *Expand data science programming*: ULS Digital Scholarship Services (DSS) offered general audience workshops on Social Network Visualization for Humanists, Data Visualization Best Practices, and several classes focused on GIS and spatial data analysis. DSS also created a spotlight collection and an online bibliography focused on Digital Research Ethics.
- *Partner with the Center for Teaching and Learning to provide students and faculty with opportunities to explore, with expert guidance, emerging digital technologies such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, 3D digitization, and 3D printing:* Digital Scholarship Services and the Open Lab partnered on a summer internship, "R&D in the Open Lab," for Pitt undergraduate students, providing them with guidance and resources to conduct projects at the intersection of digital methods and emerging creative technologies.

Future Goals

Examine Academic Library Priorities, Especially as They Relate to Research Support

In response to the evolving research landscape, we are launching a strategic review to ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of library services. This strategic reassessment will build on ongoing evaluation efforts, allowing us to refine or redirect programs as needed. We will analyze our collections, services, and programs to identify core functions and potential efficiencies, while maintaining our strong support for research, teaching, and learning. Through active collaboration with departments, schools, colleges, and campuses, we will identify high-impact investment areas that align with institutional goals and clearly demonstrate value. Key areas of focus might include:

- Developing support for AI in research and teaching, and promoting digital literacy.
- Strengthening Open Access (OA) support for publications, data, and code/software (including mandates).
- Expanding education on OA resources and promoting resharing as an access strategy.
- Supporting entrepreneurship, commercialization, and private-sector partnerships.

Assessment of Spaces and Services in the Renovated Hillman Library

Following the completion of the Hillman Library renovation, a comprehensive study will evaluate the redesigned spaces and services to ensure they effectively support user activities, enhance the overall experience, and optimize building functionality. This assessment will measure user satisfaction, occupancy levels, and space usage patterns to inform potential improvements. The study will employ a mixed-methods approach, gathering quantitative data through direct observation, occupancy sensors, user surveys, and qualitative data via user interviews and focus groups. The goal is to understand how well different zones accommodate their intended purposes, how users perceive the renovated environment, and how building resources are utilized.

The data collected will be analyzed to identify successes and areas for improvement, ultimately informing future decisions regarding space management, service delivery, and resource allocation. The findings will illuminate the impact of the renovation and contribute

to a continuous improvement cycle, ensuring the library remains a vital resource for the university and its broader communities.

Advancing Artificial Intelligence Understanding and Use in the Library and the Pitt Community

Having completed a system-wide training initiative and developed strategy and policy documents to supplement existing University-level guidance, we will enter Phase II, which will include unit-level conversations about AI's role in internal workflows and expanding support and engagement with campus AI initiatives. We expect this to catalyze initiatives for outward-facing, student-focused AI training, as well as the development of new services or AI enhancements to existing ones. The library has operationalized AI for handwriting recognition in our digitized collections, enhancing access to handwritten archival content, such as manuscripts, letters, and diaries. This process is now fully automated, enabling the AI-powered transcription and reingestion of text with minimal human intervention.

Plan for the Temporary Closure of the Frick Fine Arts Library in the Summer of 2026

A major replacement and upgrade of the HVAC system in the Frick Fine Arts building will take place in summer 2026. The project will remediate longstanding problems with environmental conditions, as well as replacing outdated overhead lighting in certain parts of the Frick Fine Arts Library space. The project requires that the Frick Fine Arts Library close during the active construction phases of work, currently projected to be 3 months. We will need to remove all collection materials from the two main public rooms in the library: the reading room, which also serves as the public entrance to the library, and the adjoining browsing room, as well as the whole 5th floor of the stacks. In advance of the project, ULS must make plans to temporarily relocate a substantial portion of the Frick Fine Arts collection, including non-standard and oversized format items. This project will leverage the work we have been undertaking, detailed in last year's report, to review protocols and physical environments for storing our unique materials, addressing any gaps or concerns that might endanger the safety of our collections The ULS will also make plans for meeting user needs for materials during the anticipated closure, and for clearly communicating before, during, and after the closure.