

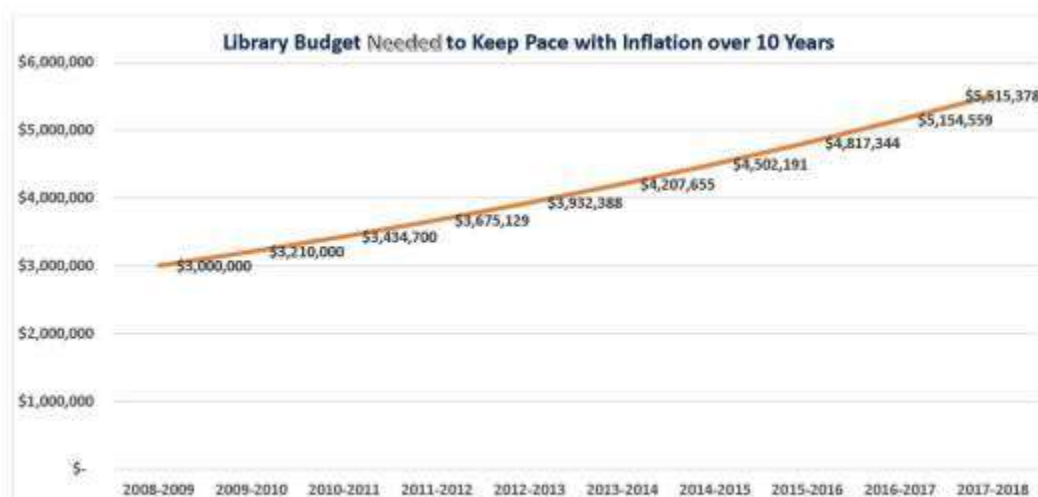
The Importance of Library Collections

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<https://faulibrarydean.wordpress.com/2017/09/29/the-importance-of-library-collections/>

Ten or twelve years ago, the FAU Libraries had a fairly robust budget for library collections. The budget for collections in 2008 was \$3 million. At the time, that was a reasonable budget that allowed us to buy many books and journals and subscribe to heavily used electronic books, journals, and databases. Compared to some of our sister institutions in Florida, we were doing pretty well. Today, the FAU Libraries budget for collections remains at \$3 million while the collections budgets at our sister institutions in the State University System have increased anywhere from 18% to 48% in the last ten years.

In addition to an unchanging collections budget, other factors have affected our ability to provide access to the books, journals, and databases that our faculty and students need for their study and research. The average rate of inflation for library collections is 7% annually. Over a decade, that is almost an 84% increase in costs. If our collections budget had increased to keep pace with the rate of inflation, it would today be at \$5.5 million.



To stay even with the rate of inflation, the FAU Libraries' collection budget should have increased by \$2,515,378 dollars since 2008, an 83.8% increase.

Even without the rate of inflation, scholarly publishing is changing. As I noted in an [earlier blog posting](#) about the nature of library collections, "as the world's scholarly output continues to increase, libraries are able to own or even provide direct access to a smaller and smaller percentage of it. [A 2014 posting on the Nature Newsblog](#) noted that "Bibliometric analysts Lutz Bornmann, at the Max Planck Society in Munich, Germany and Ruediger Mutz, at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, think they have a better answer. It is impossible to know for sure, but the real rate is closer to 8-9% each year, they argue. That equates to a doubling of global scientific output roughly every nine years."

Over the past decade, the FAU Libraries – like most academic libraries in North America – have spent an increasing percentage of our total collections budget on electronic collections. There is a common misconception that electronic access costs less money. While some may argue that it costs less money to produce electronic content, the licensing fees that libraries around the world pay for getting access to that content have surpassed the rate of inflation. We are spending more on electronic access because it costs us more every year to maintain access to the same set of resources. There have been hundreds, if not thousands, of articles written about this over the last twenty years and this situation is what prompted libraries to become champions of the [Open Access](#) Movement.

We have tried to cope and minimize the impact on our collections by taking advantage of consortial pricing packages, by using salary savings to purchase materials at the end of the year, by writing Tech Fee proposals to purchase back files of electronic content, and by making proposals to the Center for eLearning to purchase additional back files. We have also increased our reliance on Interlibrary Loan, which also carries staffing and materials costs. We are now at the point where we must either find more recurring money to put into our collections budget or we must stop buying some content and discontinue some of our subscriptions.

As part of the management of our collections, we have continued to review materials and remove outdated, little used, or duplicative content. This is a practice that all libraries follow and that is carried out according to well-defined principles and parameters outlined in our guide to our [Weeding Projects](#).

As the collections have been suffering from inadequate funding, the state of the physical library facility in Boca Raton has also been deteriorating. Students have inadequate seating, not enough access to technology, and a building that is not well maintained and that is not conducive to the way that students work and study today. [The renovation projects](#) that have been undertaken in the Wimberly Library in the past two years have been funded from special allocations from the University (\$250,000 for opening up the fifth floor), donations (\$10,000 from the University Club for the Graduate Lounge and \$14,000 from Lifelong Learning for the fifth floor), and use of Auxiliary funds (furnishings, painting, equipment on the first and second floors).

In the coming months, we will be making proposals to internal and external groups to increase both one-time and recurring funding to provide the facilities, collections, and services that the FAU community needs and deserves. Faculty are encouraged to participate in the [survey of faculty satisfaction](#) that is currently live so that we can better understand your use of our collections and our services and advocate effectively on your behalf. A student survey is planned for the spring semester.