

May 24, 2013

Texas A&M And University Of Texas Systems Open Joint Library Facility

A new library facility jointly operated by The Texas A&M University System and The University of Texas System was formally opened Friday (May 24) in what is cited as unprecedented collaboration between the state's two largest university systems. The \$6.3 million facility at Texas A&M's Riverside Campus provides space for more than a million books that will be made available for use by other academic or medical institutions.

Formally but simply named the **Joint Library Facility**, it will enable the two systems' libraries to store print books and journals using high density shelving, minimizing the physical requirements and costs of print storage. Thus, it will help alleviate pressures as the libraries continue to add volumes and related resources in their main campus libraries, officials note, and keep the burden of storage costs off individual campuses in both systems.

A 2010 study was cited showing the cost of storing a single volume in an open library stacks facility is \$4.26 per year, taking into account personnel, lighting, maintenance and heating and cooling costs. The cost is pegged at 86 cents per volume for storage at a facility such as the one now jointly operated by the Texas A&M and UT Systems – representing a savings of \$3.40 per volume.

The systems' vice chancellors for academic affairs – James Hallmark of the Texas A&M System and Pedro Reyes of the UT System – joined in formally opening the 18,000-square-foot facility following remarks that focused on cooperation and collaboration. They were joined in commemorating the occasion by Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin and the individuals who head the libraries at Texas A&M and UT-Austin, Dean of Texas A&M Libraries David Carlson and UT Vice Provost and Director of Libraries Fred Heath.

Vice Chancellor Hallmark said he "applauded this effort at efficiency, costing saving and cost sharing."

"We live in an era of unprecedented budget cuts to higher education. We must pool our resources and work together for the good of Texans, especially those with students attending our universities," he observed. "This joint library storage facility allows us to do that. We are grateful to The University of Texas System for supporting this initiative and collaborating with us."

Vice Chancellor Reyes said the opening of the jointly supported facility is important "symbolically" as well as operationally.



Texas A&M and University of Texas System Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs James Hallmark (left) and Pedro Reyes use Texas-size scissors to cut the ribbon formally opening the Joint Library Facility as Texas A&M Dean of Libraries David Carlson and Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin look on.

"This collaboration tells the real story to the world," he said, contrasting it with the well-known competition between the Aggies and Longhorns athletically.

President Loftin agreed, emphasizing the two universities "are more alike than different," adding that "they collaborate on several levels"

Heath, who formerly headed Texas A&M's libraries, joined in emphasizing the "rich history of collaboration" between the two institutions and traced the evolution of library operations overall.

He also tied library operations into service to the systems' students, who he said are "collectively the greatest assets of Texas."

Carlson, who presided at the ceremonies, said the facility will be shared by most of the libraries of both systems.

"Libraries share. It's in our DNA," he declared, adding that the new joint facility could be a factor in "setting new trends and creating best practices."

Officials explained the new facility will help alleviate pressures as libraries continue to add volumes and related resources. The facility will keep the burden of storage costs off individual campuses in both systems.

To streamline collections, the collaborating institutions will implement a novel process of "sharing" a single copy of duplicated holdings in the new facility. The process will eliminate redundancy while making a "shared" copy available for research and study among users at multiple institutions.

The facility will be operated by Texas A&M library faculty and staff.

Texas A&M and The University of Texas at Austin have collaborated on projects in the past, including the Texas Digital Library and preservation storage in the High Density Repository on the J.J. Pickle Campus in Austin. The Joint Library Facility represents a new degree of cooperation by incorporating the resource-in-common model for all materials in the facility and including general academic and medical campuses from both systems.

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