

NOAA Library Closures: A Decisional and Process Guidance  
NOAA Libraries Advisory Committee  
July 2018

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this guidance is to assist decision-makers in evaluating a potential local NOAA library closure. It provides general guidance about the value of local libraries, sets out pre- and post-decisional series of steps to follow to ensure that local stakeholders' needs are addressed, unique library collections are preserved, and cost savings are balanced with the value the local library provides both in the short and long terms.

There may be many reasons NOAA lab or office decision-makers decide to evaluate whether to continue local library operations including: need to reduce costs, need to downsize or repurpose space, staff retirements, or changes in research program direction and goals. In making this decision, it is important to recognize that a NOAA local library embedded within a lab or office provides unique services that are often more relevant, useful and cost effective than possible through a remote library or cooperative institute library. These services include:

- Research assistance from a professional librarian who understands local information needs, has developed networks for sourcing information, and can save NOAA time and money by quickly retrieving items and answers so local staff can focus on their own work.
- Unique subscriptions especially selected for the office or lab. An online subscription to a well-used journal usually results in savings when compared to paying for articles *ad hoc*. For less-used journals, NOAA librarians develop and maintain borrowing and lending agreements and networks for sourcing articles for free. These networks ("interlibrary loan") are closed to institutions without a librarian due to electronic content license provisions, which preclude another library from systematically delivering articles to users outside of an authorized user group. Open Access, the Internet and Google Scholar are not substitutes for journal subscriptions; only 35% of articles in the Web of Science index are open access and quickly available for free to researchers.<sup>1</sup>
- Unique local collections, including subject-specific and rare items that cannot be replicated elsewhere. NOAA libraries may contain valuable and comprehensive collections of undigitized reports, data and other unique items that require valuation and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 2014 data on green open access papers from WoS:  
<https://ec.europa.eu/research/openscience/index.cfm?pg=access&section=monitor>

### Steps needs to evaluate whether to close a library

#### 1. Pre-Decision Research and Analysis: General Information

Decision-maker(s) within the local laboratory or office shall form an advisory Library Evaluation Committee. Recommended members include: local office/lab management, local librarian, local library users, NOAA Committee of Librarians (COL) representative and NOAA Library Advisory Committee (NLAC) representative. It is important to include NOAA librarian representation on the Evaluation Committee as their advice and subject matter expertise can help mitigate a variety of negative impacts resulting from a library closure, including the loss of unique collection items. Tasks for the committee include:

- a. Meet with decision-maker(s) proposing the closure or the change in library services to learn what pressures, conditions or other factors have led to the proposal. This initial meeting will give the Evaluation Committee a better context in which to begin work.
- b. Consult most recent Library Annual Report<sup>2</sup> for information on Library's unique services, collections, patron use statistics, budget, and electronic content usage statistics and costs.
- c. Determine costs represented by all journal subscriptions, ongoing membership costs and any special services the library pays for regularly.
- d. Survey current library users about their library services needs and potential impacts if the library were to be closed.
- e. Determine both current and projected long-term savings (suggest 3-5 years) from closure of library. Current and long-term savings may be represented by: electronic and print journal cancellations, repurposing of space, salary savings or repurposing, reduction of IT costs.
- f. Determine both current and projected long-term costs (suggest 3-5 years) from closure of library. Current costs may be represented by: shipping unique items, temporary labor associated with packing, library catalog record work and other temporary costs associated with closing the library. Long-term costs associated from closure of the library may include the initiation of individual and duplicative subscriptions to journals, the purchase of individual articles from publishers on an *ad hoc* basis and at "retail" prices<sup>3</sup>, office/lab staff time to perform their own research and information sourcing, and impacts to other NOAA Libraries that may be called upon to provide services.
- g. Return to meet with decision-maker(s) to share information gathered in steps (a) - (f) and to obtain their vision and expectations for alternative library services. What is needed in terms of library services for the future?

#### 2. Pre-Decision Research and Analysis: Collection Assessment

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<sup>2</sup> Beginning in FY18, NOAA Librarians were asked to compile an annual report using an uniform template. (see link).

<sup>3</sup> In FY18, Elsevier journal per article average costs: \$31.50 (<https://www.elsevier.com/solutions/sciencedirect/content/pay-per-view>).

- a. Identify unique collection items in library, per NOAA Library and Information Network Catalog ([NOAALINC](#))<sup>4</sup> reports. Reports will show which titles are held in three or fewer NOAA Libraries.
  - b. Identify unique collections that are not in [NOAALINC](#), have been locally described, or have finding aids and have been identified as valuable to staff, according to the most recent Library Annual Report, or the pre-decision staff survey.
3. Pre-Decision Research and Analysis: Journal Subscriptions
- a. Identify all journal subscriptions and determine how far out they have been paid. Be sure to include any consortial subscription arrangements the library is a party to; determine ramifications on other libraries if they are cancelled.
  - b. Review electronic content available NOAA-wide via the NOAA Direct Bill process to evaluate for applicability/use by local lab/office staff. Will access to these tools suffice for local staff in the face of removal of local subscriptions?
4. Pre-Decision Research and Analysis: Library Services
- a. Based on Pre-Closure research including the Library Annual Report and local staff survey, recommend to decision-maker(s) a list of essential library services, such as: research assistance, document sourcing and delivery, library collection maintenance, or information management to be retained locally or at another library.
  - b. Engage with NOAA Library community to determine what assistance those libraries might be able to provide to staff who are losing library services.
  - c. Research local university library services that might be available to NOAA staff.
  - d. Estimate cost of services identified in 4 (a - c). Can the local office pay a remote NOAA library for these? Could and would they pay a local university for guest access?
5. Making the Decision: General Information
- Based on the pre-decision process, including input from the Library Evaluation Committee, decision-makers may choose a variety of options including, but not limited to the following:
- Keep the library open;
  - A “soft-closure” where the library is downsized and costs lowered through reducing subscriptions and/or staff hours;
  - Contracting library services out to a local university or cooperative institute library;
  - Closing the library completely. The rest of this guidance contains steps to follow for a complete closure.

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<sup>4</sup> NOAALINC is the electronic library catalog shared by most NOAA Libraries.

### *Steps needed to implement a library closure*

6. Post-Decision: Closure Process General Information
  - a. Create “closing budget” for shipping, moving and cataloging assistance.
  - b. Implement communication plan & FAQ for local staff, which includes:
    - i. The timeline for the library closure.
    - ii. What will happen to library collections (see Step 7 (a-c), below).
    - iii. How and what access to electronic journal content will continue -- if it will.
    - iv. Who staff should contact for library services, if anyone, after library closure. Regular reminders will be sent out by the Library closure committee during the first year after closure.
  
7. Post-Decision: Collections Deaccession & Disbursement
  - a. Plan disbursement of unique items to other NOAA Libraries with similar collections or from same LO. Every attempt must be made not to lose unique, valuable collection items by leaving them unattended.
  - b. In the event that local management wishes to retain unique library collection items locally, the following steps are recommended to prevent loss:
    - i. Designate a local point of contact, ideally a librarian, but at the least someone who is provided guidance by and remains connected with the [NOAA library network](#).
    - ii. Develop circulation policy and system for keeping track of items if they are to be checked out.
    - iii. Ensure collection is properly deaccessioned and disbursed should local management decide they no long want to manage the collection.
  - c. Offer non-unique collection items to local staff. Begin putting them out to be taken.
  - d. Disburse non-unique items not wanted by local staff to local libraries, federal libraries or recycling. Refer to [attached disposition guide](#) for federal library materials from Claire Steimle, Librarian, NOAA Walford Library (separate document) for guidance.
  - e. Deaccession items - remove or update location in [NOAALINC](#) for all items. Remove Library’s holdings from Online Computer Library Center ([OCLC](#))<sup>5</sup>, or remove unique [OCLC](#) records.
  - f. Determine disposition of uncataloged, undescribed collections, if any.
  - g. Determine how to handle materials lost or missing, and materials found and returned after library closure.
  
8. Post-Decision: Journal Subscriptions

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<sup>5</sup> **OCLC** is a global library cooperative. Among other services, it provides a union catalog for libraries world-wide. <https://www.oclc.org/en/home.html>

- a. Determine if the library has paid for perpetual access to any electronic back files and if so, arrange for a librarian at another library to manage access. Determine whether there are any electronic subscriptions the office wishes to continue to support. To avoid duplication of effort, the office may wish to check with the [NOAA library network](#) to see if their subscriptions can be carried on another contract vehicle, such as the Central Library Journal subscription contract.
  - b. Arrange for cancellation of all remaining subscriptions, memberships or service agreements at beginning of next calendar year. Journal subscriptions cannot be cancelled mid-year for refunds.
9. Post-Decision: Library Services
- a. Based on the information determined in step 4 (a)-(d), establish plan for library services, going forward. Finalize relationship with staffs of other NOAA libraries or with the staff of local university library who have agreed to provide services. Establish financial arrangements for either.
10. Final Closure Steps
- a. Reassign Property/deaccession property
    - i. Determine if Library holds any [NOAA Heritage Asset collection](#) items and arrange for reassignment to another property custodian.
    - ii. Create informal property inventory with local property custodian or property accountability officer.
    - iii. Shelving, furniture, book trucks, preservation supplies, etc. will need to be redistributed/moved out of the space.
  - b. Ship unique collection items identified in Step 7, above, to appropriate NOAA Libraries.
  - c. Discontinue library website, if one exists. Build in a web page redirect with message that the library is no longer active and redirect user to another library (if that library agrees) or to whatever resource the local office recommends.
  - d. Complete final communications to local libraries, local and regional communities, [NOAA library network](#), other library networks, federal agencies, and international library associations.
  - e. Complete final communication to local staff about remaining library services available within [NOAA library network](#), or elsewhere as decided by local management. Within first year after library closure, repeat this message to staff each quarter.