UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LIBRARIES

Reimagined

FALL 2025



Visualizing the Future

UH Libraries sets out to become a research library befitting a top 50 public university, designed to meet the dynamic needs of students, faculty and scholars.



MARCH 7, 2027, MARKS A SINGULAR OCCASION: the University of Houston will celebrate its 100th year. The heart of the University, UH Libraries provisions the collections, resources, services and spaces driving student success and research excellence, on campus and beyond. As the University approaches its Centennial, UH Libraries honors the Cougar Pride legacy of dynamism and determination. We invite the community to join us as we reflect on a century of momentum, highlighting the UH Libraries' vital role in preserving our story and propelling our future.

DEAN'S LETTER

At University of Houston Libraries, we're on a journey of reinvention.



WE'RE CREATING THE FOUNDATION for a Reimagined Library, a big idea that will drive the development of modern, vibrant and inspiring spaces and services designed to meet the dynamic needs of UH students, faculty and scholars.

Our vision is to become a research library befitting a top 50 public university — a paradigm of collaboration, community and convergence.

What is the Reimagined Library? How will we achieve this goal?

The Reimagined Library stewards collections through collaboration. The majority of UH Libraries' square footage is allocated to print holdings, but our students and faculty are engaging digitally with scholarly materials. We're rethinking how we balance print resources and space through a collections care model that expands electronic access, centers long-term preservation and protection of the scholarly record, and makes high-circulating print volumes more visible in research and engagement areas. Through partnerships across the state and the nation, we'll explore cost- and space-efficient print collection stewardship options to facilitate a transformation with more study space and streamlined service delivery methods.

The Reimagined Library is an engaging focal point for the UH community. The library is integral to the University experience. Students feel a sense of ownership over their library, and they deserve a space where they feel comfortable and inspired. We want to create a variety of customizable, contextual spaces that match our students' needs in terms of how they learn, reflect and connect. Reimagined, our spaces will uphold the traditional spirit of the library alongside a bright, sleek, flexible, mobile-first design. We want to strategically center learning, research and engagement areas connected to co-curricular services, such as the micro-credential in the Digital Humanities and Teaching and Learning peer mentors, that build community among UH students and improve student success outcomes.

The Reimagined Library facilitates convergence. Solutions to the world's big problems originate in places of centrality. It's going to take conversations, openness and an understanding that research, and the knowledge that comes from it, is a public good to advance humanity. We are drivers of open scholarship and connectors facilitating interdisciplinary research. Through established campus partnerships, we're expanding awareness of what's possible and creating opportunities for students and faculty to engage and explore potential collaborations that can yield new insights. From lectures by prominent thought leaders and scholars to exhibits featuring rare and unique archival materials to an inspiring undergraduate scholarship showcase, we're leveraging existing synergies to discover fresh ideas.

We've advanced several key initiatives and projects toward our goal of realizing the Reimagined Library vision, yet there is so much more to do. As you read the impact stories herein, I invite you to imagine future possibilities. I invite you to become a part of our Reimagined Library journey.

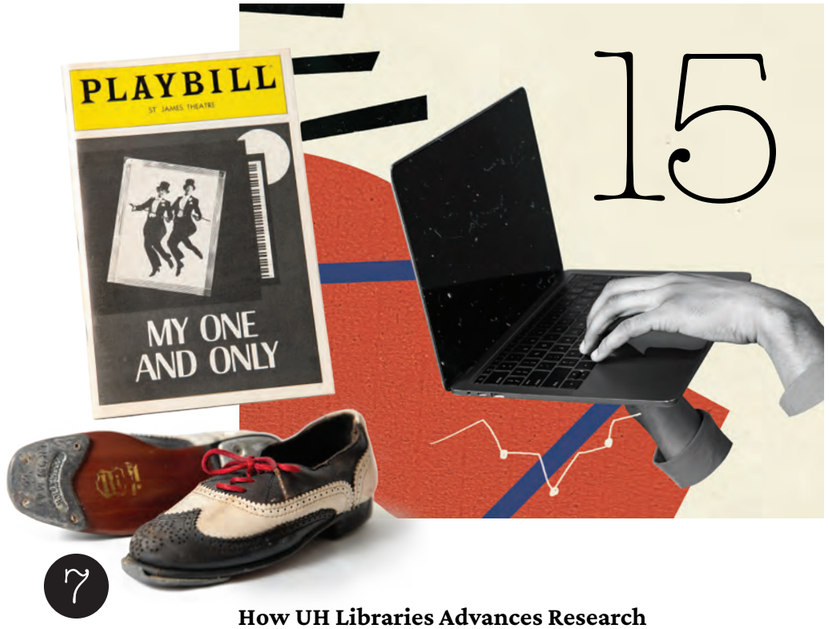
Warm regards,

CHRISTINA H. GOLA
Dean, University of Houston Libraries

MAURICIO LAZO

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UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

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How UH Libraries Advances Research and Learning

Led by associate deans, four distinct portfolios ensure the Libraries' priorities complement those of the University.

University of Houston Libraries is organized to align with the University's strategic plan. Each portfolio, led by a UH Libraries associate dean, works collaboratively with other units to advance the research and learning priorities of UH.

Collections Strategies and Discovery

AD: KERRY CREELMAN

The CSD portfolio uses flexible, user-centered and data-informed strategies to get students, faculty and scholars the information they need as quickly and easily as possible.

Highlights from the 2024–2025 academic year:

- **Implemented LibKey**, a suite of services that improves access to academic resources through enhanced linking and browsing options.
- **Piloted an article-on-demand service** that allows faculty to request select articles not included in Libraries' journal subscriptions, reducing subscription costs and avoiding interlibrary loan services.
- **Started implementing a new course reading service** to amplify library holdings in alignment with course syllabi, helping faculty build more robust reading lists.
- **Wrapped up the planning phase of a print collections inventory** to ensure our catalog accurately reflects our physical collections.

Organizational Development, Learning and Talent

INTERIM AD: SANTI THOMPSON

The ODLT portfolio is responsible for recruiting, retaining and enhancing UH Libraries talent. Our units support professional development by connecting our library colleagues with ongoing learning opportunities.

Highlights from the 2024–2025 academic year:

- **Collaborated with UH Libraries departments to recruit nine new employees**, all of whom will be essential to serving the organization's mission and vision moving forward.
- **Engaged our UH Libraries colleagues in professional development opportunities**. These included training sessions on building leadership skills, learning new facilitation strategies and techniques, and a variety of academic library workflows and best practices.









ASSOCIATE DEANS.
(Top to bottom)
Kerry Creelman,
Santi Thompson,
Ariana Santiago,
Lauren Gottlieb-Miller

Research and Student Engagement

INTERIM AD: ARIANA SANTIAGO

The RASE portfolio supports the learning and research needs of both students and faculty. Our units collaborate to integrate information literacy education in curricular and co-curricular learning experiences, engage interdisciplinary research communities in the production of new knowledge, expand access to learning materials through open education, and support the needs of health professions programs.

Highlights from the 2024–2025 academic year:

- **Piloted a peer mentor program** in which undergraduate student leaders expand the reach of UH Libraries' information literacy education efforts through peer-to-peer learning. Read more about the program on page 18.
- **Launched new partnerships with the digital media program and the Center for Public History**, providing internships that engage student researchers in digital humanities. Read more about how UH Libraries supports digital humanities on page 14.
- **Supported six courses in adopting open educational resources**, giving more than 400 students free access to course learning materials, and launched a new OER professional development incentive in which 16 faculty earned a certificate. Read more about the advances in open education on page 10.
- **Increased student engagement events and activities** to enhance awareness of library spaces, resources and services at the Health Sciences Library and the Medical Library.

Special Libraries and Preservation

AD: LAUREN GOTTLIEB-MILLER

The SLP portfolio is dedicated to the stewardship of distinctive and material-intensive collections, including rare books, archives, manuscripts and other unique or fragile materials that require specialized care, handling and expertise. The portfolio engages distinctive collections to support scholarly and creative work and faculty and student excellence.

Highlights from the 2024–2025 academic year:

- **Processed and made thousands of archival items discoverable** by updated finding aids and digital platforms, significantly enhancing access for researchers and students. Newly processed collections now open for research include the UH College of Nursing Records and the Student Government Association Records.
- **Digitized 40 years of issues of The Daily Cougar student newspaper** to make this valuable historical resource available to the public ahead of the UH Centennial. More than 500 issues are now available online, and new issues will be added every week.
- **Acquired several high-impact collections** — including the records of Tommy Tune, the photographic archive of Suzanne Paul and an important photography archive documenting queer life in Houston in the 1970s — to benefit our research audiences. Read more about the Tommy Tune collection on page 7.



JACK MITCHELL

The Tune Boon

UH Libraries acquires a new collection celebrating the legacy of incomparable Texan Tommy Tune.

WHAT DIDN'T TALL TEXAN Tommy Tune accomplish in the performing and visual arts world?

Students and scholars will be able to explore that question and much more thanks to a new collection at University of Houston Libraries that preserves and celebrates the legacy of the prolific dancer, singer, director and choreographer. Tommy Tune and his sister, Gracey Tune, generously gifted the items to UH. Gracey is the founder and artistic director of Arts Fifth Avenue in Fort Worth, where much of the collection was housed.

Mary Manning, the archivist instrumental in the collection's acquisition, sees a host of opportunities for how it can advance academic and scholarly productivity. "The Tommy Tune Collection is a significant contribution to the study of theater history, particularly musical theater," she says. "Tommy Tune is not only a talented singer, actor and dancer but also a celebrated director, producer and choreographer. His archives will be enlightening to scholars and performers researching any of these fields."

Thomas James Tune was born in Wichita Falls, Texas, and grew up in Houston, where he attended Lamar High School. After graduating from The University of Texas at Austin, the 6-foot-6 tap dancer began graduate studies in directing at the University of Houston but soon left Texas for New York City, where his career launched from day one. In 1965, Tune made his Broadway debut in the production of "Baker Street," followed by "A Joyful Noise" (1966) and "How Now, Dow Jones" (1967).

Tune is the recipient of 10 Tony Awards, including the 2015 Tony for Life Achievement in the Theatre. He is the

only star in theatrical history to win in four categories and the only person to win the same Tony Awards two years in a row. Tune was also awarded the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor for artistic achievement, by President George W. Bush. He was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1993.

And those accolades only scratch the surface. Tune's illustrious performing arts career comes alive in the massive collection, which includes costumes, scripts, production and publicity photos, newspaper articles, posters, paintings, scrapbooks, correspondence, sheet music, playbills, drawings, souvenir books, production documents and awards and honors.

Katy Allred, assistant university archivist, will survey each item, bit by meticulous bit. Archival materials often arrive at UH Special Collections in containers such as plastic tubs or cardboard boxes. Items might have binders, such as rubber bands that can harden and stick, or fasteners that can rust. Part of the job of an archivist like Allred is to go through the entire collection, identify preservation concerns and intervene. This process will bring to light the condition of each item, which will inform preservation in archival enclosures, such as how to store Tune's dazzling sartorial pieces. "We don't usually get collections with a lot of costumes," Allred says. "The challenge of preserving hats, shoes and coats will be a new thing to learn."

Allred will gain a sense of how to arrange the collection into series for the finding aid that will be published online. "I know how important and inspirational Tommy Tune has been for so many aspiring performers in my own life, people from the South who looked up to him as someone like them who made it," Allred says. "I can't wait to make this collection available and accessible to everyone." The collection will be of particular interest to UH students, faculty and researchers seeking primary source materials on Tune's life and career, including documentary filmmakers, biographers, dance historians, musical theater performers, directors, producers and choreographers.

"The Tommy Tune Collection is a transformative addition to both our University Archives and our Visual and Performing Arts collections," says Lauren Gottlieb-Miller, associate dean for special libraries and preservation. "This gift ensures that students, researchers and artists will have a direct connection to one of the great creative forces of American theater for generations to come. We are honored to steward Tommy Tune's legacy in the city and University that helped shape him."

This collection is being processed and is not yet available for viewing. Visit libraries.uh.edu/special-collections for more information.











PRIZED COLLECTION
The Tommy Tune Collection includes dazzling sartorial pieces, Playbills and rehearsal photos, among other artifacts, from his prolific career.

INSPECTION
Assistant university archivist Katy Allred carefully checks each item of the Tommy Tune collection to ensure proper preservation.

THE IMPACT OF OPEN EDUCATION

A UH Libraries program started as a cost-saver for students. Now it empowers them in their learning.

IN 2018, UH LIBRARIES launched an initiative to help mitigate the high cost of textbooks for students. The Open Education Incentive Program awards UH faculty who create or adopt open educational resources to replace commercial textbooks in their courses. An open educational resource might be a full course, module, book, lesson plan, video or other such learning tool that has been licensed to allow anyone to freely use and repurpose it.

To date, the program has removed roughly $2.56 million in traditional textbook costs for nearly 20,000 students.

Now, faculty have more opportunities to engage with open education. A new award category, Open Educational Practices, allows professors to create openly licensed learning objects or to replace a traditional assignment with a renewable one. Additionally, a professional development incentive offers a stipend for faculty who complete an open education certificate program.

As interest in open education at UH continues to grow, so does the scope of related services provided by librarians Kate Carter and Ariana Santiago, who are reimagining what open pedagogy support encompasses. More professors are encouraging their students to contribute to the creation of course materials, accelerating the need for a framework to support this teaching practice.

Open education is not only about saving money on textbooks. Students can be active co-creators in learning, which helps foster collaboration and customization of open learning materials. It gives them broader access to academic opportunities, such as writing chapters of an open textbook, which could become part of their curriculum vitae or portfolio. It also provides agency, letting students choose to include their names or publish anonymously, and to select their own open license.

UH librarians are supporting ways in which students can be creators of information, not just consumers of it. Carter and Santiago collaborate with faculty to identify assignments that would be good fits for open pedagogy. They introduce students to the benefits of open publishing, author rights and responsibilities, and distribution. Students also get a sense of what it's like to use Pressbooks, an open publishing platform.

The feedback has been positive. Students are empowered to create and bring their own knowledge into the classroom and use it to enhance their learning. They are excited to publish their work, putting effort into something that will be used by others. By turning assignments into collaboration with plenty of opportunity for feedback, professors enable students to develop high-quality open learning materials that will benefit future students.



LEARNING REIMAGINED
Kate Carter, open education librarian, empowers instructors and students to develop open learning materials with collaborative assignments and plenty of feedback.

UH librarians are supporting ways in which students can be creators of information, not just consumers of it.

Shaping the Future of Open Education

How can UH Libraries support open educational practices in a sustainable, scalable way? Santiago and Carter have developed an approach that includes instructional expertise, such as working with faculty to develop a renewable assignment and technical guidance for use of the open publishing platform.

They're sharing their knowledge too. In a 2023 peer-reviewed article, "Exploring sustainability in library support for open pedagogy collaborations," published in Communications in Information Literacy, Carter and Santiago offered insights on how academic librarians can establish an open pedagogy service model.

They described their collaboration with faculty to support an assignment in which students co-created an open textbook, focusing on the scope of support offered by UH Libraries, which included consultations, instruction sessions and managing the publishing platform. Their findings are widely applicable, and the significance of their scholarship in this area is emphasized by the fact it was cited as a top trend in academic libraries by College & Research Libraries News.

Carter and Santiago also have forthcoming chapters in "The Open Pedagogy Cookbook," a publication from Association of College and Research Libraries with "recipes" for guidance from librarians who have implemented open pedagogy support at their institutions. And, as part of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Division of Digital Learning Texas OER Fellowship Program, Carter is developing an open pedagogy online course, specific to what a professor needs to know about embracing open pedagogy.



Carter also attended Open Education Global 2024 in Brisbane, Australia, where she and her spouse, Nelson Carter, senior lecturer of mathematics at University of Houston-Clear Lake, presented "Opening the Didactic Contract: How Open Pedagogy Challenges Implicit Classroom Norms." The didactic contract comprises expectations that students bring to their educational pursuits, a tacit agreement predicated on the instructor teaching and the student doing homework, taking tests and earning a grade.

Open pedagogy can shift that traditional classroom paradigm, and although it can empower students to leverage their experiences, some might be unsettled by the change in teaching approach. The presentation offered insights on how professors can mitigate such barriers and prioritize student agency, ensuring that the learning experience is both enriching and impactful.

The UH Libraries Open Education Services team is available to advise faculty on effective ways of bringing open pedagogy into courses. Contact oer@uh.edu.

TEAMING UP
Open education enables students to be active co-creators in learning, which helps foster collaboration.

Supercharging the Humanities

Student and faculty scholars harness the power of technology to advance their humanities research with the Digital Humanities Core.



Within the interdisciplinary field of digital humanities, technology is a powerful tool that enables scholars to transform and deepen their research, broaden information access, and engage the public. At the University of Houston, those scholars receive support from the Digital Humanities Core.

Created as a partnership between the Hewlett Packard Enterprise Data Science Institute and UH Libraries, the DH Core serves both student and faculty researchers with a digital project production and publishing facility equipped with technological infrastructure, research tools and interdisciplinary expertise. Scholars are encouraged to reach out with ideas and strategize with DH Core specialists around how they can use technology to elevate their research plans.

The world of digital humanities at UH is growing, thanks in large part to the efforts of talented, driven students. These self-starters bring a variety of strengths and specializations, such as data science skills, to the program. Opportunities abound for students to analyze and clean research data and to collaborate with faculty on identifying data issues and offering solutions.

"A Community of Practice"

As director of the Digital Humanities Core Facility, Linda García Merchant is reimagining ways for UH students of any discipline to get involved in digital humanities.

"We're beginning to shift the culture," García Merchant says. "Faculty don't have to do this work by themselves anymore. We're building a community of practice, finding practitioners suited to create better opportunities for the scholarship

“DH connects the arts and technology in a more engaging, accessible way while preserving history.”

— MARYAM ELDERSHABY, DIGITAL HUMANITIES INTERN AND LEAD DESIGNER



they’re producing.”

DH gives students autonomy and challenges them to get comfortable with explaining their work and making points clearly. For example, DH students teach their peers how to use data visualization tools such as Tableau and ClioVis. And, because students learn best from one another, they often create better outcomes.

Students have helped in other ways — hosting public-facing DH events, publishing a newsletter, leading virtual workshops on data tools and holding their own walk-in consultation hours. Along the way, they’ve mastered the techniques of building DH projects and gained real-world experience, making them more marketable when it comes time to find a job.

Supported by the DH Core, the digital media internship pilot program empowers students to work as developers of humanities projects with public-facing deliverables. They become part of a multidisciplinary team, collaborating over 15 weeks to create a fully developed research site that may consist of blog posts, data visualizations and mapping, descriptive content, and other interactive features.

One such project is Señora Power, a 2023 US Latino Digital Humanities Center Grant in Aid recipient. The project, which will live on the USLDH project portal provided by the DH Core, is led by principal investigators at several universities who track the changes in political consciousness and identity expression of women of Mexican descent living in Houston or Los Angeles from 1900–1984. The investigators research archival material and interview community members, piecing together a narrative with the goal of making Chicana history widely accessible.

That’s where Lauryn White (’23) and current undergraduate student Maryam Eldershaby come in. As interns, their task was to bring the Señora Power project to life online. In coordination with the principal investigators, White determined how they wanted to present the project findings to the public on the website. She organized the website’s planning and production and facilitated asynchronous communication.

After learning about Eldershaby’s experience and skill set, White recommended her as the team’s lead designer. Eldershaby’s role was to preserve the digital archives by creating a user-friendly, interactive website containing data visualizations, audio files, archival images and geographical data. She designed visuals and wireframes in Figma that aligned with the project’s message.

Eldershaby says she’s grateful for her teammates, who were professional and collaborative. “Working with this group opened new experiences for me and advanced a lot of my skills,” she says. “I’m really proud of all the work we have done.”



Eldershaby also previously worked on SYRIOS: Studying Urban Relationships and Identity Over Ancient Syria, a DH project that “brings the history of ancient Syria to modern audiences through a study of coins.” It was working on this project, she says, that helped her realize that preservation for posterity is a primary factor in the field of digital humanities, which presents a wealth of opportunities for researchers to collect, evaluate and share information in new and dynamic ways.

“The Señora Power website is accessible for individuals to explore the stories, and it also preserves important cultural knowledge for the future, unlike a paper that could be crumpled up and gone forever,” Eldershaby says. “DH connects the arts and technology in a more engaging, accessible way while preserving history.”

During her time in the DH Core, White learned how to code a website, among other technical skills. She’s now studying for a master’s in neuroscience and behavior at UH-Clear Lake, but she was pursuing her bachelor’s in psychology when she began working on her first DH Core project, The Year 1771, which provides a new approach to reading texts to uncover word patterns.

“I was in charge of migrating website material from Wix and building the 1771 website in the DH Core facility domain,” she says. “I eventually took what I learned and used it to give helpful critiques when I evaluated Maryam’s Señora Power website.”

White says DH offers something for everyone. “There’s always something that needs to be preserved. Digital humanities is so expansive; it’s not just computers and numbers. There is a humanities portion that needs people to preserve community material, such as photos or writings. It’s more than just tech.”

DH creates entry points that allow us to see concepts and data anew. It’s about showing and telling stories in a way where we all can understand them better.

“The great thing about DH is that it helps us engage our curious selves,” García Merchant says. “I always tell students to do DH with joy, because when you’re really interested in what you’re doing, you’ll be fascinated by all the different potential directions you can take.”

Pioneering Peers

Thanks to UH Libraries, undergrads can pick up invaluable research skills and pass them along to their peers as student mentors.

THE PEER MENTOR PROGRAM is a new initiative at UH Libraries that aims to transform the way students learn and collaborate.

Peer mentors are undergrads who learn skills in research and information literacy concepts, such as developing keywords or refining a research topic, and go on to teach their peers across campus through co-curricular engagement. Led by student success librarian Carolina Hernandez, the program expands the reach of the Teaching and Learning team's services and resources, with the purpose of improving information literacy and student success rates.

First, training: The mentors undergo thorough online learning modules and discussions, workshops, and observation sessions. They grasp what and how to teach. As they become familiar with library resources and info lit concepts, they begin collaborating with librarians and each other to assess how familiar UH students are with the library and then tailor instruction and engagement accordingly. They're also able to answer the more involved questions about academics and research.

Second, the test: The mentors develop their own interactive workshops, demonstrating mastery of the concepts and audience engagement. They're empowered to incorporate their personal interests, apply what they've learned and build confidence by sharing their ideas with others.

Third, outreach: The mentors interact with peers at tabling events and information sessions, demonstrating how UH Libraries supports student success. They're encouraged to forge connections with student groups and organizations and promote specific services that may be most relevant to those constituencies.

Gabrielle Epps conducted one such introductory workshop for the Texas Scholars, a group of first-year students who benefited from an overview of the Libraries' resources. Lexi Gaddis and Nilesh Garg co-led a workshop for students in the RED Labs Summer Accelerator Program, designed to help UH students, faculty and recent alumni develop their business ideas.

"Peer learning is an essential skill to have," Gaddis says. "It's not only about teaching others with less experience; it's about connecting with peers who share your level of expertise and helping them pick up new abilities or improve existing ones."



COLLABORATION Student success librarian Carolina Hernandez leads the peer mentor program to help improve information literacy outcomes.

What's next for the peer mentor program? It's evolving, in part due to a flexible framework and the valuable perspectives the mentors bring. They're helping to shape the path of the program as they figure out how their strengths and interests fit with the Libraries' needs and the needs and the communities it serves.

In the future, Hernandez hopes the mentors will be able to hold one-on-one consultations in an inspiring, dedicated space in the library.

"Peer-assisted learning has been shown to not only improve students' understanding but also give them a sense of belonging," Hernandez says. "We hope that, through getting help from peer mentors, students will feel more welcome and comfortable using UH Libraries."

STUDENT FEEDBACK
Reimagining the MD Anderson Library included refreshing several floors, including 1, 7 (pictured) and 8, to foster greater collaboration and comfort.

Refreshed Library Spaces



STUDENT AND FACULTY success depends on access to modern, flexible spaces for studying and collaboration. That's why new, contemporary furniture has been added to floors 1, 7 and 8 at MD Anderson Library.

Inspired by student feedback reflecting preferences for a variety of study seating options and consistent with the Reimagined Library vision, the space refresh began in September 2024 with floor 1. There students can choose from relaxed, counter-height and laptop-friendly, soft seating.

More recently, 160 seats were added to floors 7 and 8, including single-user carrels and rounded pods, as well as tables with privacy screens. Students and researchers can enjoy inspiring views of the University and the city from these floors.

75 YEARS

On April 1, 2026, University of Houston Libraries will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the dedication of MD Anderson Library.

As the University of Houston approaches its 100th anniversary in 2027, we're reflecting on the legacy and impact of UH Libraries while looking ahead. Our bold, ambitious master plan will preserve traditional library spaces to honor the history of MD Anderson Library and our University, and it will transform static spaces into active, collaborative areas that reflect the way students learn today.



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