UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LIBRARIES

Reimagined

FALL 2026







Through the Decades

Honoring UH Libraries' 75-year history while **boldly imagining our future**.

This has been a landmark year for University of Houston Libraries. That momentum will continue into 2027.



THIS YEAR, we celebrated the 75th anniversary of the MD Anderson Library, a milestone that invited us to honor our history while boldly imagining our future. That future is the Reimagined Library, our vision for creating modern, vibrant, and inspiring spaces and services that meet the evolving needs of UH students, faculty, researchers, and scholars.

The timing could not be more significant. As the University prepares for its Centennial celebration in 2027, the Libraries is helping tell the story of the remarkable growth and success of UH through an exhibit supported by the UH Office of the President, our largest to date. Together, these milestones have encouraged us to reflect not only on where we have been, but also on where we must go.

We are doing so at a moment of profound change in the information landscape. Generative artificial intelligence is transforming how we search, create, evaluate, and communicate information. In this environment, the role of the academic library is more imperative than ever.

The foundation of our Reimagined Library vision begins with a thoughtful new approach to managing our print collections. As use of general print collections continues to decline across disciplines, we are exploring collaborative stewardship models at the state and national levels. These efforts will help us use space more strategically while ensuring continued access to scholarly resources. They will also allow us to create more visible, engaging environments for high-use collections, learning, collaboration, and discovery.

At the same time, we are expanding access to our distinctive special collections and archives while strengthening our commitment to information literacy. Programs such as Historian's Craft demonstrate how students can engage with primary sources and critically evaluate evidence — skills that are increasingly essential in an age when information is often curated, filtered, and generated by technology.

These competencies also support the growing fields of digital scholarship and digital humanities. Through our Digital Humanities Core, we help students and faculty explore the full lifecycle of digital projects, enabling new forms of research, creativity, and knowledge production.

As a Tier One research library, we also have a responsibility to preserve knowledge for future generations. This issue highlights the careful, specialized preservation work that protects our collections while creating opportunities for expanded access and engagement.

Many of our supporters joined us for our premier 75th anniversary celebration and experienced firsthand our history, our impact, and our vision for the future. If you were unable to attend, I invite you to explore the achievements and stories featured in this issue. As you do, I hope you will join us on this exciting journey as we reimagine the future of UH Libraries together.

Warm regards,

CHRISTINA H. GOLA
Dean, University of Houston Libraries

MAURICIO LAZO

FALL 2026

Contents



p16

From Student Workers to Staff Members 4

Four staffers reflect on their career journeys at UH Libraries.

Handheld History 6

UH is the fifth U.S. entity to acquire a rare edition of Magna Carta, in honor of a longtime benefactor.

The Art and Science of Maintaining a Library Collection 8

Collections strategy has changed dramatically. UH Libraries has adapted to meet the moment.

Learning How To Think Like a Historian 10

A collaborative seminar takes undergraduate history students out of the classroom and into the UH Libraries' archives to sharpen their research skills.

Humanities for All 12

How UH's digital humanists transform research into something interactive and discoverable, therefore more accessible for everyone.

'Coogs' House: 100 Years of UH Campus Design' 16

How an exhibit reveals the stories behind a century of impact.

Library Vibes 20

Explore the five distinct locations administered by UH Libraries.

UH Libraries
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

PUBLISHER
Christina H. Gola

EDITORIAL
Esmeralda Fisher

CONTRIBUTORS
Meghan Miller, Carina Pouraryan

PHOTOGRAPHY
Kyle Boberg

DCustom

SVP, Growth & Strategy
Chris Phelps

SVP, Editorial & Creative
Jennifer Chininis

EDITORIAL

Design Director
David Radabaugh

Managing Editors
Maria Baneux, Katie Stroh

Art Directors
Sam Solomon, Corrina Spurlin

Graphic Designer
Kaya Lee

Copy Editor
Staci Parks

BUSINESS

VP, Brand Strategy
Cory Davies

Operations Manager & Account Director
Rosalind Lynam

Account Director
Brianna Barger



Celebrating 75 Years at the Heart of UH

IN 2026, University of Houston Libraries marked an auspicious milestone: the 75th anniversary of MD Anderson Library, a place that has served generations of Coogs as the intellectual heart of the University. A series of events commemorated the Library's enduring impact and its exciting future.

The celebration began in April with Cheers to 75 Years, a festive campus gathering that welcomed students, faculty, and staff to celebrate the Library's legacy of learning, discovery, and community. Held at MD Anderson Library, the event featured carnival-inspired games, refreshments, and anniversary-themed giveaways, creating an atmosphere that reflected the Library's role as both an academic hub and a gathering place.

In June, the Library focused on the people whose dedication has shaped the institution over the decades. The 75th Anniversary Employee Celebration reunited current and former employees for an afternoon of fellowship and reflection. Hosted at the Elizabeth D. Rockwell Pavilion, the summer celebration featured photos, prizes, and shared memories that highlighted the lasting relationships built through service to the University community, and the collective contributions of Library employees whose work supports teaching, research, and student success.

The slate of events culminated on Aug. 29, with the MD Anderson Library 75th Anniversary Celebration, bringing together alumni, donors, UH leadership, and friends of the Libraries. Guests enjoyed a unique Library experience, the immersive "Catalog of Curiosities" featuring treasures and exhibits of the Library's history and evolution, dinner, and special remarks celebrating the Library's past while looking ahead to a reimagined future. The evening featured keynote speaker Shane McAuliffe, UH alumnus and creator of "The Texas Bucket List."

As the Library reflects on 75 years of service since its dedication in 1951, the months-long celebration underscores a shared commitment to ensuring that future generations of students and scholars continue to benefit from a thriving center of knowledge, innovation, and opportunity.

Congratulations to the 2026–27 UH Libraries Scholarship Recipients

REPRESENTING VARIOUS LIBRARIES departments and academic programs, seven dedicated student workers distinguished themselves through meticulous work ethic and exemplary leadership to receive academic scholarships for the 2026–27 school year.

"Receiving a scholarship eases the financial burden of college and allows me to stay focused on my goal of building a career in healthcare administration and making a meaningful impact in the healthcare field," says Amahri McReynolds.

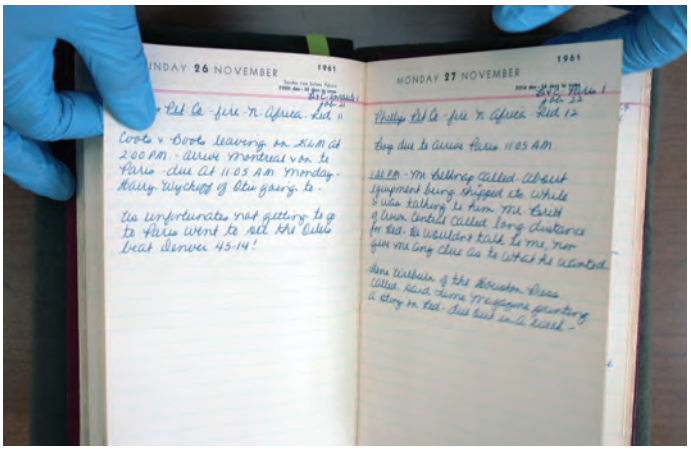
"I am really grateful to receive this scholarship," says Vinh Nguyễn Han Nguyễn. "It is a wonderful gift for my current journey and a great motivation to continue my studies."

Made possible by the generosity of donors, the Libraries was able to distribute a combined $20,440 in financial support via the Belle Griggs Johnson Scholarship Endowment, John P. McGovern Library Scholars Endowment, and Glenna M. Scamell Memorial Award Endowment.

(L–R) Reem Nihad Ashraf, Riya Dhanduke, Amahri McReynolds, Shreedhar Senthil Kumar, Christina Miller, Vinh Nguyễn Han Nguyễn, and Khanh Doan







Cathy Frank is a Chi Omega alumna and current advisor to the sorority (left). An example of the primary sources highlighted in Cougar Collections episodes (top).

KYLE BOBERG

Chi Omega Cougar Corner Rededication

ON DEC. 17, 2010, the Psi Zeta Chapter of Chi Omega donated $25,000 to University of Houston Libraries to create the MD Anderson Library Cougar Corner. This gift enabled UH Libraries to purchase two high-power computers that resided in the Learning Commons, a first-floor workstation for students.

Fifteen years later, to prepare for The Honors College expansion, in August 2025, Cougar Corner was relocated to the second floor, where it now represents study room 221J. It's outfitted with modern tools for meeting, studying, and inventing.

"Back in the day, UH students went to MD Anderson Library and studied by themselves," says Cathy Frank, Chi Omega alumna and current advisor to the sorority. "They checked out books, read the material, took notes in their spiral notebooks, and returned the books they borrowed. Fast forward to the last 10 years or so — almost all students collaborate with other students on projects. They have their own laptops and tablets, and they need space to meet up."

On April 18, 2026, a rededication ceremony was held to unveil the new space and reflect upon the 15 years Cougar Corner served as a place of teamwork, research, and creation for students, allowing them to do more, learn deeper, and reach higher.

"Chi Omega's original gift created a collaborative hub where students could access a suite of computational tools," says UH Libraries Dean Christina H. Gola. "As both technology and student needs have evolved, so has this vision. With Chi Omega's support, we proudly rededicate the Chi Omega Cougar Corner as a multimodal, connectivity-driven study space for today's learners, while honoring the spirit of the original gift."

Preservation and Access: Bringing Archives Alive

COUGAR COLLECTIONS is a new video series from University of Houston Libraries featuring rare and distinctive research materials. Archivists "show and tell" items from the collections, surfacing the stories, voices, and insights that illuminate our history and inform our future. The inaugural episode focused on the Red Adair Collection. Forthcoming Cougar Collections episodes will highlight The Daily Cougar collection and Rare Books.

By highlighting primary source materials and their research value, Cougar Collections connects audiences with archival treasures found at UH Libraries while emphasizing how crucial preservation is to student success and research productivity.

Preservation protects rare, unique, and fragile materials that cannot be replaced, ensuring long-term access to primary sources, which are the foundation of deep learning and original scholarship. Preservation and digitization ensure that these materials remain accessible for historical, cultural, scientific, and artistic inquiry, broadening access for researchers regardless of location or ability to handle fragile items and safeguarding the original artifacts that make authentic scholarship possible.

Scan the QR code to watch the first episode of Cougar Collections featuring the Red Adair Collection.

From Student Workers to Staff Members

Four staffers reflect on their career journeys at UH Libraries.

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON Libraries houses a multitude of useful items, helpful services, and practical zones. Yet, behind the stacks and study spaces exists an even more invaluable resource: the staff.

With 21 departments serving five different locations, UH Libraries has an expansive employee roster that contains professionals with varying expertise, as well as numerous student workers. In some instances, those undergraduate and graduate part-time hires stay on with the Libraries after graduation, becoming full-time staff members who often return to the area they worked as students.

"There's really something for everyone in the Libraries, and once you're embedded in that as a student and get a sense of the possibilities, it's easy to see yourself sticking around and growing with the organization," says Jamie Duke, director of organizational development and talent management for UH Libraries.



Jacob Honey

Jacob Honey joined UH Libraries in the fall of 1994 and has since dedicated 32 years to shelving. "I think I had a work-study grant that first year, then left for the summer and came back and have been here since," he says.

During his time with the Libraries, Honey has witnessed the renovation of the Red Wing, construction of the Gold Wing, reduction of photocopiers, decommissioning of index tables, relocation of Special Collections, redesigned levels, streamlined systems, and adoption of e-preferred. Despite these changes, his role remains deploying students and connecting people to services.

"It's still getting the books back to the shelf," he says. "We build our day around retrieval: the paging that comes out of ALMA in the public-facing part of the catalog, and the interlibrary loan pulling."

Honey, who has hired an abundance of his own student workers, has maintained relationships throughout the decades with others who have shared his path.

"Good colleagues and good student workers. That's really what's kept me here," Honey says.



Photo taken circa 2000.

Yesenia Umaña

Yesenia Umaña, a department business administrator, joined the UH Libraries team in September 1998 as a student worker on the former database maintenance and book labeling team.

Like Honey, Umaña has experienced firsthand the differences between UH Libraries past and present. "There are so many changes," she says. "I cannot begin to tell you."

One notable milestone: the 2009 launch of UH Digital Library, which represented the inception of free online access to rare items stored in the Libraries' physical archives.

Regardless of the shifts Umaña has observed in her 28 years of service, she values the institution and its energy, citing those as reasons for her long career with UH Libraries. "I like the culture," she says.





Allison Young

Allison Young started at UH Libraries in 2022 as a student library assistant, eventually reclassifying to graduate student library assistant once enrolled in a UH master's program.

"My time was primarily split between being at the front desk, where you're the first person someone sees," she says, "and the back, where you're helping one of our librarians or archivists on some sort of project."

Upon completion of her second degree, Young became a full-time staff member in the role of Special Collections library manager. Her responsibilities include scheduling visitor appointments, answering reference questions, and monitoring materials use.

"The work is different," she says. "My transfer into this higher role means seeing more of what goes into managing and upholding and serving people in the Libraries."

Young, who oversees the Special Collections student workers, strives to offer them the same opportunities she had. "I've worked on a lot," Young says. "That was one thing that I really enjoyed that my former managers did for me. They found the projects that really fit with me, and that's something that I try to do for my students."

Young feels her niche is archives, a field she interprets as the intersection of her interests in history and art. "I really enjoy the work we do here," she says. "I enjoy this environment, and I enjoy research and helping visitors find things."

Riley Vagis

Riley Vagis started with UH Libraries in 2023 as a graduate assistant in the Music Library. Although she is now a full-time service desk supervisor in MD Anderson Library, she still supports the Music Library when needed.

"I'm trained for both places," Vagis says. "Currently, you will find me more at MD Anderson. Occasionally, you'll find me at the Music Library, and it's always nice to come back home, so to speak."

Vagis double majored in vocal performance and music theory as an undergraduate and later completed a UH vocal performance master's degree. "That helped me in a ton of ways when doing reference here at the Music Library," she says. "People will come in and they're like, 'Oh, this is the vibe I'm looking for,' which isn't a lot to go on. It's fun getting to work with them, because I get to reference a lot of my personal background in music."

In addition to using her music training, Vagis appreciates that UH Libraries fosters an atmosphere of personal advancement. "I'm such a fan of the encouragement to better yourself, as an employee and a person," she says. "There are constant opportunities for learning more or attending conferences."

Vagis' commitment to her profession is a response to the security and satisfaction she feels working for UH Libraries, where she hopes to stay. "I truly feel safe. I feel like I am wanted in this industry," she says. "At the end of the day, knowing I have a job that wants me there is such a nice feeling."

> "That was one thing that I really enjoyed that my former managers did for me. They found the projects that really fit with me, and that's something that I try to do for my students."
>
> **— ALLISON YOUNG**
> SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY MANAGER

Employees like Honey, Umaña, Young, and Vagis embody the broad swath of career avenues, skill sets, and vocational endeavors available to pursue via UH Libraries. Their ever-growing institutional knowledge is an irreplaceable asset to the University, and their storied career trajectories exemplify the lasting benefits of student work and long-standing tradition of growth at UH Libraries.

KYLE BOBERG

Handheld History

UH is the fifth U.S. entity to acquire a 1540 copy of Magna Carta, made possible by a gift in honor of a longtime benefactor.



KYLE BOBERG



Scan to learn more about how to support UH Libraries or make a donation today.



UH Department of History chair Catherine F. Patterson looks through the rare book.

MORE THAN 800 YEARS AGO, in 1215 England, a group of barons rebelled against King John in opposition to his treatment of them and his failings at home and afar.

"He had lost a lot of the English lands in France. He was in conflict with the Pope. All sorts of things went wrong," says Catherine F. Patterson, chair of the University of Houston Department of History and professor of early modern British history.

When King John's forces lost the battle with the barons, he had no choice but to sign an agreement that protected free English peoples from certain royal practices while preserving their civil and political liberties. That document, known as Magna Carta, is considered the foundation of the Anglo-American law tradition, as many ideas found in the text have evolved into contemporary legal principles.

"In 1215, they were not trying to invent due process or the ideas of liberty and jury trials," Patterson says. "But you can see they had some sense about needing some process, that we do have this thing called law, and we need some guardrails around the absolute arbitrary will of an individual."

Thanks to the generosity of Howard Holsenbeck, who donated in honor of a longtime benefactor, UH Libraries Special Collections was able to purchase a 1540 printed edition of Magna Carta. UH is the most recent U.S. institution to own a copy, bringing the national total to five.

Julie Grob, rare books archivist, is processing the new acquisition, which is a pocket-size printed version of the original scribed Latin charter.

"It's printed, so it's not unique in the way that 13th-century documents handwritten on parchment are unique," Grob says. "But it's quite rare."

Contributing to the rarity is the presence of handwritten annotations throughout the material.

"I love to see the evidence of use in a rare book," Grob says. "This [note] is handwritten by the owner, who was holding this book just as I'm holding it now."

The dimensions and marginalia suggest it was used actively as a reference work from its 16th-century creation through at least the 19th century.

"It's very special to have handwritten signatures on the title page of people who owned the book previously," Grob says. "At one point in the 16th century, it belonged to Thomas St. Aubyn, who was from an elite family in Cornwall and a member of Parliament. In the 19th century, it belonged to an Edward Gatty and later an H.J. Farrar."

Grob and Patterson believe having such a prized piece of history on campus will enhance the research and teaching conducted at the University and abroad.

Patterson, who views Magna Carta as directly relevant to several courses she teaches, plans to bring her students to Special Collections so they may interact with it in person.

"It's the opening of the mind that can happen with something like this," she says. "The idea that this object is here and that students can use it, that they might draw something from it, and they can read someone's name who owned this book and wrote in the margins just like they write in the margins of their books. I think that is a sort of shared humanity."

Grob envisions a multitude of disciplines being able to learn from Magna Carta, and she encourages anyone with interest to visit Special Collections to see the acquisition made possible by Holsenbeck.

"We'll be able to use this document for teaching history, for teaching political science, for teaching the law, for teaching book history," she says. "Through his generosity, we're able to have this really exceptional book that we can teach with, put on exhibit, and share with people on campus and beyond."

The Art *and* Science *of* Maintaining a Library Collection

Collections strategy has changed dramatically. UH Libraries has adapted to meet the moment.

BEHIND EVERY JOURNAL ARTICLE, database, e-book, and streaming resource accessible through the University of Houston Libraries is a careful process of evaluation, analysis, collaboration, and negotiation. While many assume libraries simply purchase materials and make them available, collections strategy today is far more complex, taking into account larger University priorities, curriculum support, research needs, accessibility, how users discover information, and costs.

For Wenli Gao, head of Collections Strategies and Services, success means all library users can reach the information they need. That outcome requires a balance of creative thinking and analytical rigor.

"Data analysis is a science, but there's an art to asking the right questions of the data, to figuring out what questions aren't answered from the data, and where we need to talk to people to paint a complete picture," Gao says.

Over the past decade, the role of collections strategists has changed immensely. What was once largely focused on selecting and purchasing books has evolved into managing access across a complex ecosystem of digital resources. Librarians today are analyzing data; evaluating access models; and collaborating with faculty, researchers, publishers, and library colleagues to ensure that collections align with the evolving needs of the University.

The conversation has also shifted away from the idea of "owning" resources. "The volume of scholarly output has grown exponentially," Gao says. "Owning everything became financially and physically impossible and strategically unnecessary."

Ownership models have become increasingly difficult to sustain because the cost of scholarly content has risen faster than library budgets. Access-based models help UH Libraries make the most of a limited budget while providing timely, reliable, and broad access to the information the UH community depends on.

The shift from print collections to digital resources has expanded opportunities for access, but it also introduced new challenges. Most digital resources are licensed rather than sold, meaning libraries must

continually negotiate contracts, manage subscriptions, and navigate regular price increases. Licensing agreements are based on the publishers' rules and library needs, including time-limited access; specific usage rights; and restrictions on sharing, printing, or downloading. These rules require extensive review before a resource becomes available to the UH community. "UH negotiates these terms for our resources, often annually," Gao says.

Moreover, there is no guarantee of perpetual access, a fundamentally different concept than the historical model of purchasing print books the library would own forever. This reflects the broader conversation surrounding digital ownership. If a user purchases content from a digital platform, only to lose access when the platform removes or withdraws that content, the traditional concept of ownership is called into question. In such cases, access, rather than ownership, defines the experience for users, who expect seamless discovery and instant access from any location.

Steadily rising costs add another layer of complexity. What may appear to be an affordable resource for an individual can carry a significantly higher price tag when licensed for use across an entire university. As Gao notes, an e-book that costs only a few dollars through a retail platform may cost thousands of dollars when purchased with campus-wide access rights.

To make the most of limited resources, UH librarians rely on data-informed collection management practices when deciding whether to retain or discontinue access to materials. Usage is one factor, but librarians also consider cost per use, alignment with academic programs and research priorities, and overlap with similar resources.

Information access means no paywalls blocking essential knowledge, accessible formats for all abilities, and inclusive materials. It means a discovery system that is intuitive, with clean metadata and seamless linking across platforms. It means a library collection that reflects and supports UH curricula and research priorities, including critical emerging fields.

Ultimately, data, expertise, and collaboration allow UH Libraries to remain a thoughtful steward of resources and a trusted avenue to the knowledge that powers the University's mission.

Wenli Gao, head of Collections Strategies and Services, works to ensure all Libraries users can reach the information they need.



KYLE BOBERG

Learning *How To* Think Like a Historian

A collaborative seminar takes undergraduate history students out of the classroom and into the UH Libraries' archives to sharpen their research skills.



"Historian's Craft" introduces students to historical research methodologies and provides opportunities to collaborate with different disciplines.

LIBRARIES ARE ESSENTIAL resources for historians, but the library's function is not always clear to students just beginning in the field. This year, University of Houston Libraries is collaborating with the UH Department of History to teach undergraduate students about historical research methodologies by taking them out of the lecture hall and into the archives. This 16-student seminar, called "Historian's Craft," aims to give students an understanding of working with primary sources and conducting research.

History is the study of the past through evidence left behind, and historical research requires documents. These documents take many forms: some are primary sources, meaning they are firsthand records of an event created by someone present when it occurred; others are secondary sources, which analyze or interpret primary sources. Whether primary or secondary, these documents come in a variety of formats, including books, letters, photographs, diaries and journals, films, audio recordings, visual art, signage, bureaucratic forms, artifacts, and data. Knowing how to work with these sources is essential for history students because the discipline depends on a historian's ability to analyze, interpret, and draw conclusions from the evidence available.

"These sources are foundational for the work of the historian and for building and supporting evidence-based arguments," says Kelly Hopkins, assistant professor of early American history. History is "grounded in evidence," adds Kristina Neumann, associate professor of Roman/digital history, "but historians must rigorously sort through that evidence and help make sense of it."

As repositories for books, documents, and other information, libraries are institutions that can aid historians. "Historian's Craft" aims to connect history students with libraries early in their instruction. Research practices are often taught in



KRISTINA NEUMANN

> “It’s important to recognize that librarians, archivists, and historians are all partners in the work of preserving and communicating knowledge of the past.”
>
> **— KRISTINA NEUMANN**
> ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ROMAN/DIGITAL HISTORY

later capstone courses or, in many cases, only at the graduate level. “Previous to this, at least in recent history, the history department had not had a research methods course for history undergraduates,” says Natalia Kapacinskas, a Teaching & Learning librarian.

The origins of “Historian’s Craft” date to 2022, when the history department undergraduate committee reached out to Julie Grob, coordinator for instruction in Special Collections. Initially, the course was designed to give undergraduate history students the chance to work directly with primary sources from one of the Libraries’ collections.

Today, the broadened course includes UH Libraries Teaching & Learning. “We wanted to create a more comprehensive program for students,” says Veronica Arellano Douglas, head of Teaching & Learning.

This iteration of “Historian’s Craft” includes four workshops. In the first two, students work hands-on with primary source documents in Special Collections. Past courses have featured materials from the Houston Hip Hop Research Collection.

Students first learn about archives directly from archivists themselves. Next, they are given a primary source document and asked to break into groups to analyze it. They observe the document and ask questions: What are its physical characteristics? When was it created, by whom, and for what purpose? These foundational questions inevitably lead students down further avenues of inquiry, and they are encouraged to bring their own perspectives to the analysis. “Working with original sources in an archive allows them to express curiosity and critical thinking as they analyze materials,” Grob says.

In the second two sessions, students work with Teaching & Learning, where they learn how to place primary source documents in context by using secondary sources. These sessions bridge primary source analysis and secondary source research. For example, students examine a journal article and its references, exploring what sources were used and where they can be found. They use both physical and digital repositories in their research.

According to Kapacinskas, the purpose of these sessions is to “lead them from questions about archival sources to asking research questions — in other words, to think like a historian.”

By working with librarians from Teaching & Learning, students learn to apply the skills they gained in Special Collections to their own research topics. In this way, “Historian’s Craft” serves as both an introduction to historical research methodologies and an opportunity for different disciplines to work together.

Students are not the only ones who benefit from the collaboration; the course also gives history professors, archivists, and librarians an occasion to share their unique perspectives. “We want to get students to think about how information comes to be,” Arellano Douglas says.

“It is a great hands-on experience for the work of the historian who researches and writes about the past, as well as the archivist who works to preserve that past for future generations,” Hopkins says. “It’s important to recognize that librarians, archivists, and historians are all partners in the work of preserving and communicating knowledge of the past,” Neumann adds.

When students are exposed to different disciplines, they not only enhance their research abilities, but they also see the many different paths their study of history can lead them down. Some students have even expressed interest in attending library school because of their participation in “Historian’s Craft.”

“When archivists, librarians, and historians all listen to each other’s expertise, the students win,” Grob says.

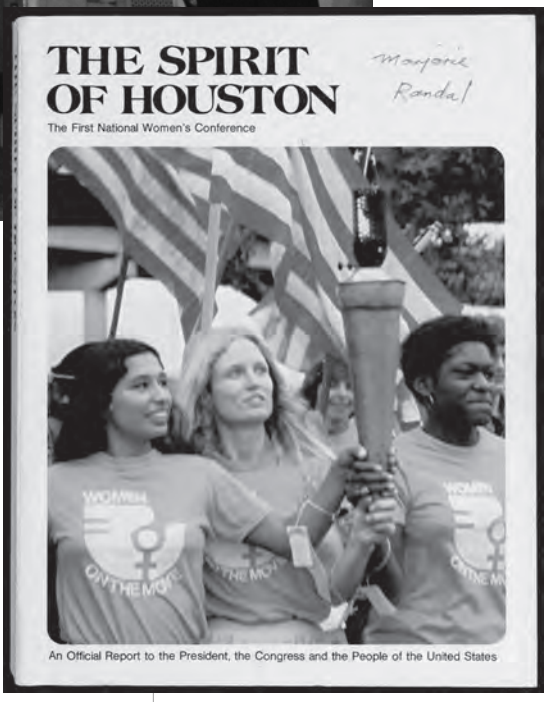


Valeria González (left) and Dr. Linda García Merchant collaborate on digitizing physical items the DH Core can then develop further.

Humanities *for* All

How UH's digital humanists transform research into something interactive and discoverable, therefore more accessible for everyone.





"Sharing Stories From 1977" was supported by the University of Houston Digital Humanities Core to chronicle the lives of the more than 150,000 participants of the 1977 National Women's Conference.

DIGITAL HUMANISTS are on a mission to make research accessible and interactive, especially when the original materials were created long before the Internet age. Thus, a substantial component of the digital humanities process is transforming the physical into the electronic so it can exist virtually.

Consider these examples from the University of Houston Digital Humanities Core.

"Sharing Stories From 1977" chronicles the lives of more than 150,000 participants of the 1977 National Women's Conference. Studying Urban Relationships and Identity Over Ancient Syria, known as "SYRIOS," highlights ancient Syrian history for modern audiences through the study of coins, some of which date as far back as Before the Common Era. Both "Sharing Stories" and "SYRIOS" are websites that host digitized materials and their associated findings, allowing anyone with an internet connection to locate and learn from them.

Many digital humanities projects begin when someone, likely a researcher, has collected physical content, studied it, and amassed important takeaways about it but doesn't know the best way to convey the work's significance online.

That's when digital humanists become involved, with the goal to help those researchers "envision and produce articulations of their work to interested audiences," says Dr. Linda García Merchant, director of the UH Digital Humanities Core.

Valeria González, doctoral student in U.S. history and graduate research assistant to Dr. García Merchant, notes it is often the researcher and their assistant who initially digitize physical items into virtual versions. Then the DH Core can generate an online space and supporting tools.

"Let's say you're a professor, and you have done all this research. You have taken scans of all these papers, and you've already looked at them closely and come to your own conclusions about what they mean," González says. "Then you would meet with Dr. García Merchant, take her micro-credentialing class on introduction to the digital humanities, then meet with people who know how to turn something into a website."

The DH Core currently has a new undertaking: the Black magazines archive, which is a collaboration between Dr. Lisa Volpe, head of department, curator of photography for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Dr. Rex Koontz, Moores Professor of Art History in UH's Kathrine G. McGovern College of the Arts.

"Dr. Volpe and her team found a lot of Black magazines from the 20th century and digitized them and did metadata for

Digital Humanities Project Life Cycle

STEP 1

A researcher is interested in putting studied materials and related findings online to make them accessible to a broader audience.

STEP 2

The researcher shares materials and findings with digital humanists, who evaluate the content to select the best online platform and virtual tools to catalog and convey the information.

STEP 3

Digital humanists assemble an interdisciplinary team to take the vision from draft to finished work, the size and functionality of which suit the materials.

STEP 4

Members of the interdisciplinary team tackle assigned tasks: designers craft layout, developers write code, UX advisors evaluate operability, and researchers ensure materials and findings are represented accurately.

STEP 5

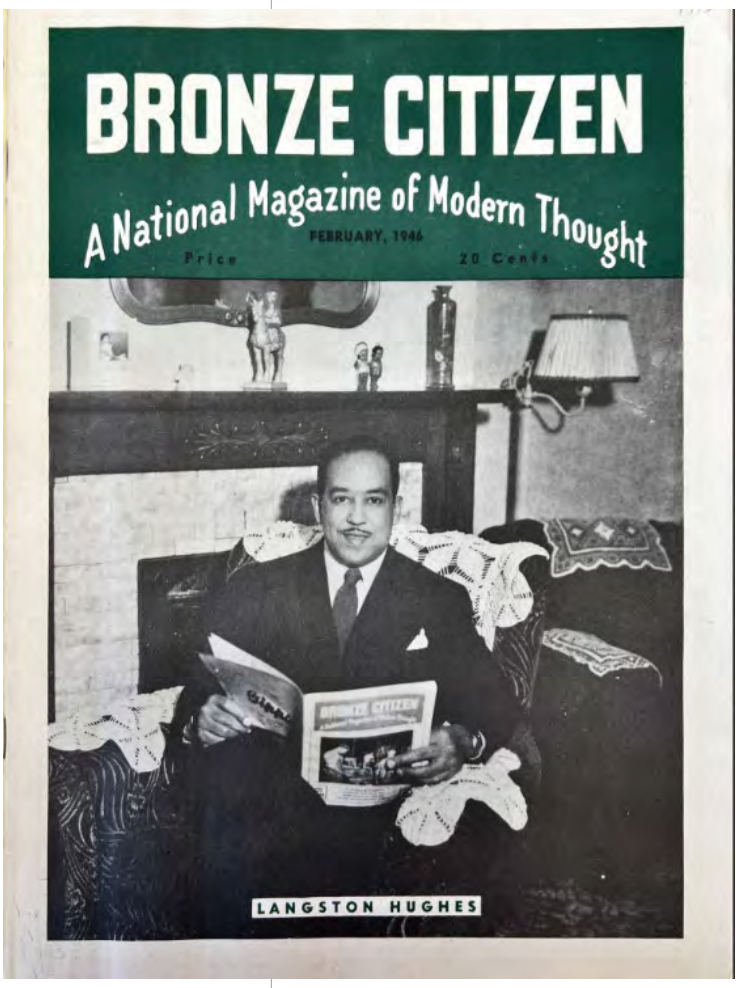
Materials and findings are uploaded, complete with relevant tools, and published for public use. Once-static materials are now accessible and interactive, allowing anyone interested to find and engage with the work online.



"[Digital humanities] takes something that was locked up and opens it to researchers across the country or students or someone who just stumbled across it out of curiosity."

— VIVIAN NGUYEN
SENIOR DIGITAL MEDIA MAJOR &
PRESIDENT OF UXCOOGS





Covers from a selection of magazines that were once static and will now be a part of the interactive Black magazines digital archive.

them," says González, who serves as project facilitator.

In addition to González and Drs. Volpe and Koontz, a DH Core employee specializing in data visualizations and UH students with relevant skillsets are part of the Black magazines archive working group.

In her role as facilitator, González meets with the team every couple of weeks or so to check on everyone's progress. One of those team members is Vivian Nguyen, senior digital media major and president of UXCoogs, a club based at UH Sugar Land. Nguyen interns as a UX/UI designer for the DH Core through the 2026 Design and Development Internship Program.

Her main focus: designing the full user experience and visual identity for the Black magazines archive platform. "Think of me as an architect," says Nguyen. "I'm building out the blueprint, the map for it, and then I give it to the developer team to construct it."

To Nguyen, the aim of digital humanities is to close the gap between information and those who may not know how to access it. For the Black magazines archive, this entails making the publications publicly discoverable for the first time through a searchable and easily browsable medium.

"These magazines existed. They documented real communities and real culture, everyday life across the 20th century. But because they weren't widely circulated at that time, most people today have never really seen them and probably never would," Nguyen says.

"They're probably sitting in archives, physically preserved but invisible to the public. Digital humanities changes that. It takes something that was locked up and opens it to researchers across the country or students or someone who just stumbled across it out of curiosity."

The Black magazines archive is an ongoing endeavor; design and code are still taking shape. When finished, the final product will be a well of resources for professional and casual learners alike.

"The Black magazines archive would be for people who like art or Black history or Black fashion," González says. "It could be for researchers who are studying Black history from the 20th century and maybe Civil Rights, because we made sure to choose articles and issues that touch on that."

As seen via existing and evolving DH Core projects, digital humanities broadens the availability of knowledge by putting stationary content online and formatting it to be engaging for all visitors. Through dynamic designs, thoughtful frameworks, and comprehensive codes, digital humanists enable research to go further than ever before.

KYLE BOBERG

‘Coogs’ House:





Moody Towers



Stephen P. Farish Hall



University Center



Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture

100 Years *of* UH Campus Design'

How an exhibit reveals the stories behind a century of impact.

UH LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

WITH THE UNIVERSITY of Houston's 100th anniversary on the horizon, a team of archivists, librarians, and campus leaders has assembled to create the largest, grandest historical exhibit UH Libraries has ever produced.

"Coogs' House: 100 Years of UH Campus Design" aims to educate and delight visitors with a visual celebration of pivotal moments in the history of the University's campus planning. But the exhibit is about far more than the built environment.

Behind the scenes, months of research and archival discovery have shaped the exhibit's central question: How do you show and tell the story of a university that grew from a small night school into one of the nation's largest public research institutions?

The answer, according to the exhibit's creators, begins and ends with students.

A Story Rooted in Student Need

The exhibit's guiding idea emerged from research conducted for the University's Centennial Plan, led in part by architecture professor Patrick Peters. As planners designed the physical future of UH, they also looked back, examining how past generations shaped the campus and its mission.

That research revealed a consistent theme throughout the last 100 years: Student needs have driven the University's growth from the beginning.

The University of Houston traces its start to March 7, 1927, then known as Houston Junior College. At the time, educational options for many Houstonians were limited. Students needed a place to pursue college studies that fit their lives and schedules, and they successfully persuaded leaders to establish an institution that allowed for greater access to higher education.

"Students created the need for the University," says Mary Manning, archivist and exhibit curator. "Student enrollment shaped the University, and the University itself has shaped student success."

The college became the University of Houston in 1934. Two years later, the institution acquired land for a permanent campus, later opening its first building, Roy Gustav Cullen Memorial Building, in 1939.

At first part of Houston Independent School District, then a private institution, UH later became public, receiving state support, building more, hiring top faculty and researchers, and attracting students who demanded an elevated educational experience.

That spirit of student agency soon became the standard across campus life. As enrollment grew, academic programs expanded, new facilities were built, and the University evolved in response to the dynamic student population.

It's a theme that became the foundation of the exhibit narrative.

Following a Century of Growth

The exhibit, opening in January 2027, will occupy a sweeping footprint, stretching from the entrance of MD Anderson Library Special Collections on floor 2 and wrapping around the atrium. Visitors will follow a largely chronological journey through the University's history, beginning with early campus plans in the 1930s and tracing decades of expansion, transformation, and achievement.

Eras of the physical campus serve as the exhibit's organizing framework. Historical photographs, architectural drawings, publications, and artifacts illustrate how the built environment evolved alongside the University.

Beyond the University's architectural history, buildings become evidence of bigger stories: Students studying and socializing, veterans returning from war, researchers pushing scientific boundaries, and artists finding creative homes.

The exhibit reflects the evolution of the University's structures and landscape intertwined with the student imprint.

"University of Houston is the students' house," Manning says.

Discovering the Turning Points

As exhibit archivists mapped a century of UH history, several pivotal periods emerged.

World War II stands out as one of the most consequential. During the war, University facilities supported military education and training efforts, and new buildings rose to meet wartime needs. The physical campus became a direct reflection of broader national trends, and when the GI Bill brought waves of veterans and their families to campus, dramatically increasing enrollment and prompting rapid expansion, the University responded by providing housing and facilities called Veterans Village.

Later decades brought additional transformations. Partnerships with institutions such as NASA strengthened research programs and facilities. Major philanthropic gifts, including support that helped establish nationally recognized arts facilities, attracted distinguished faculty and talented students.

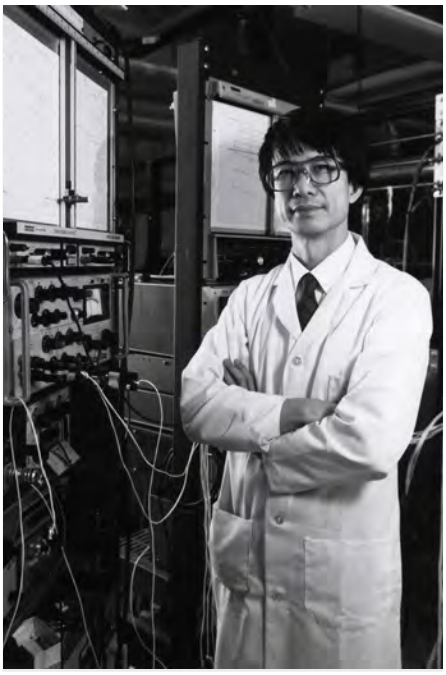
Each chapter reinforced the same pattern: Changing needs led to new spaces, and new spaces enabled new possibilities.

Beyond the Timeline

While the exhibit follows a chronological arc, some stories called for their own space.

Seven standalone vignettes will be featured as accompaniments to the main narrative. These focused sections allow visitors to explore episodes that carry significance beyond a single point in time. Among those stories are the University's origin as Houston Junior College, great moments in athletics, trailblazing student leaders, and transformative cultural shifts.

The vignettes serve a dual purpose: They enrich the broader narrative while ensuring landmark stories are explored in greater depth than a traditional timeline allows.



Dr. Paul Chu is a pioneering physicist whose groundbreaking contributions to superconductivity have advanced scientific discovery around the world.

UH LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



The Roy G. Cullen Memorial Building, designed by Alfred C. Finn and Lamar Cato, opened in 1939 as the first completed building at the permanent campus site.





Lynn Eusan (1948–1971) graduated from UH in 1970, leaving a legacy of student leadership and advocacy that continues to shape the UH experience (above). A man in a Cullen Rifles (drill team) uniform sits with a woman in front of the Ezekiel Cullen Building (left).

What the Archives Show

The exhibit celebrates University history and reveals the hidden labor behind preserving institutional records.

Many of the most compelling discoveries came not from well-known publications but from recently processed archival collections. Archivists are finding, organizing, and digitizing photographs, documents, correspondence, and organizational records that allow for a fuller, more accurate understanding of the past. This work also enhances access to UH history, making materials searchable and discoverable for students, alumni, scholars, and community members. Those efforts have influenced exhibit development, providing historical evidence that might otherwise have remained hidden.

Creating a Sense of Pride

The exhibit materials are undeniably rich with nostalgia while being nicely academic. Architectural styles, campus planning documents, historical renderings, and institutional records may not immediately sound exciting, yet the exhibit team knows the deeper story transcends those details and serves to inspire Cougar pride in each visitor.

At its heart, the Centennial exhibit is about the people who made the University. It is about students who demanded educational opportunity, faculty who built programs, alumni who carried the University's name into the world, and communities that helped shape the institution across generations.

As March 7, 2027, draws near, the meaning of our journey becomes clear. The University's history is a record of growth and construction as well as a testament to the people whose vision, determination, and belief built an enduring institution together. Their collective efforts transformed an idea into a thriving University.

As we celebrate this legacy, the Cougar community looks ahead with confidence that the same spirit of collaboration and innovation will guide the University's next hundred years.

Library Vibes

Explore the five distinct locations administered by UH Libraries.





UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON hosts an array of spaces for working, studying, and connecting with peers. UH Libraries oversees many of them, managing five libraries with unique looks, distinct atmospheres, and pertinent resources. UH Libraries offers a scene for everyone, whether they are seeking a quiet corner of solace, a bustling venue of comradery, or a nook to make their own. Here, students share what they like about their favorite spots.

1. MD Anderson Library

Explore eight floors.

"I like that there are different seating arrangements. If you come with a group, you have all the different tables and levels. If you come by yourself, which I usually do, I like the independent study rooms."

— ALIYANA ROBINSON
SOPHOMORE INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING MAJOR

2. William R. Jenkins Architecture, Design & Art Library

Nestle into community.

"I love the green chairs; I feel right at home. I know all the librarians because I've come so many times. I'll come with the vaguest topic of research, and they'll help me find books for it. This is really the artists' library."

— IRENE WILLIAMSON
SENIOR PAINTING STUDENT

KYLE BOBERG









3. Music Library

Absorb radiance and inspiration.

"The places to sit are right by the windows. I like the natural light, and I like being so close to books. It's so easy to access things."

— **ANASTASIA SCIRETTI**
JUNIOR MUSIC EDUCATION MAJOR

4. Health Sciences Library

Find your focus.

"For me to concentrate, I need specific places that are more of that studying environment. I've tried a lot of places, and this one works the best."

— **JESSICA GUTIERREZ**
PH.D. GRADUATE WHO STUDIED BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING

5. Medical Library

Match moment to mood.

"I think it's really cool there are different little spots that facilitate what you're working on. If I want to be secluded, I can hide in the booths. But if I need some light and some sun, I can go to the cubicles and still have a sense of privacy."

— **MADELINE ALAYA**
THIRD-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENT

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HOUSTON, TEXAS
PERMIT NO. 5910

Guests gathered at MD Anderson Library on Aug. 29 to support the Reimagined Library vision. To learn how you can join us on this exciting journey, scan the QR code above.







