



## Search for the Vice Provost and Director of UT Libraries

### THE SEARCH

The University of Texas at Austin (UT), the flagship university of the state of Texas and one of the best universities in the world, seeks a visionary and collaborative leader to serve as its next Vice Provost and Director of the University of Texas Libraries (VP and Director). Founded in 1883, UT is home to about 52,000 students, 3,000 faculty members, and 15,000 professional and administrative staff. The University offers top national programs across 19 colleges and schools and attracts more than \$650 million annually for research discovery.

The University of Texas Libraries, with nine campus locations, is one of the greatest libraries worldwide. A member of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), UT Libraries' collections are the 14th largest among ARL institutions, with more than 24 million total library materials, including physical volumes, electronic resources, and other items, and the UT Libraries have been ranked 14th in the ARL Library Investment Index. UT Libraries' excellence reflects 140 years of dedication by librarians, staff, faculty, students, and donors to build a top academic research library by assembling distinctive and comprehensive collections, offering exceptional services, and creating dynamic spaces to support and inspire students and scholars.

The next Vice Provost and Director will join UT at a time when the University aspires to become the world's highest-impact public research university. The University's strategic plan aims to make UT the best place to learn, grow, and work; prioritize community impact through partnerships; and change the world through transformative learning, research, and experiences for students, faculty, and staff. UT Libraries is a critical contributor to and driver for the success of this plan. Working with colleagues across the University and within UT Libraries, the next VP and Director will extend the extraordinary record of the UT Libraries, championing and advancing the work of the organization and UT writ large.

The University and UT Libraries seek a visionary library leader, a collaborator and partner, a superb strategist and tactician, an advocate for excellence, and a gifted and transparent manager. The ideal candidate will demonstrate a commitment to and passion for research universities, a sophisticated

understanding of the current and future states of libraries, nuanced thinking about organizational structures and their evolution, and an orientation to teamwork.

A search committee has been constituted and Isaacson, Miller, the national executive search firm, has been retained to support the committee in this recruitment. Confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations can be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**

UT is a leader in higher education. Its mission, spirit of public service and leadership, innovative culture, geographic location, and scale (it is the 10th largest university in the U.S. by enrollment) position UT as one of the most impactful and influential universities in the world. Its fundamental purpose is to transform lives for the benefit of society through research, creative activity, scholarly inquiry, and the development and dissemination of new knowledge. UT fulfills this purpose through a tremendous range of educational offerings and transformational research at scale.

UT offers more than 150 undergraduate and 230 graduate degree programs and is among the nation's top producers of doctoral degrees. Annual research expenditures were more than \$1 billion in FY23, with federal support led by the U.S. Department of Defense. UT is home to some of the world's fastest supercomputers and is a charter member of a consortium building the world's largest telescope. In 2012, the University established the Dell Medical School, supported by a founding gift from Michael and Susan Dell.

UT's main campus spans 431 acres. In addition to the main campus near downtown Austin, the University has additional campuses and facilities, including the J.J. Pickle Research Campus in North Austin, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in South Austin, the McDonald Observatory in West Texas, the Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, Texas, as well as several cultural, historic, and research sites across the state.

The University has been a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) since 1929. In 2020, it was designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution and was awarded the prestigious Seal of Excelencia (held by only two AAU institutions). In addition, UT is an officially recognized Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution.

### ***Leadership***

[Dr. Jay Hartzell](#) is the 30th President of UT. A graduate of the University, he served as the 12th Dean of UT's McCombs School of Business before being named President in 2020. His tenure as President

has been marked by the launch of a 10-year strategic plan, the beginning of a \$6 billion fundraising campaign, [What Starts Here](#) (the most ambitious campaign in UT's and the state's history), and impressive gains in faculty recruitment, startups, medicine, affordability, and societal impact.

[Dr. Rachel Davis Mersey](#) is Executive Vice President and Provost of UT, having been named to the role in September 2024. Prior to her appointment, she was Dean of Moody College of Communication and holds an appointment as the Everett D. Collier Centennial Chair in the School of Journalism and Media.

### ***The City of Austin***

Located beside the Hill Country of Central Texas, one of the country's most unique and beautiful regions, the city of Austin is the state capital and the fourth largest city in Texas (and the 11th largest city in the United States). U.S. News and World Report has ranked Austin ninth among the nation's best places to live, based on measures including value and quality of life.

Austin serves as the corporate headquarters for Fortune 500 companies such as Oracle, Dell, and Whole Foods. Austin is also home to research and development offices for major technology-oriented companies, including Amazon, Apple (the largest campus outside Cupertino), and Google, which have established operations in Austin in large part to draw from the skilled talent the University produces.

Austin is celebrated as a creative center that attracts talented people worldwide. The city promotes itself as "The Live Music Capital of the World," with major music festivals, countless live music venues, the long-running PBS series Austin City Limits, and South by Southwest (SXSW), a large and diverse conference held annually in March. This is a rapidly growing community, widely seen as friendly and vibrant.

## **THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS LIBRARIES**

Few academic research libraries can rival the advantages and scale of the [UT Libraries](#). It is the largest of four separately administered research components at the University — the others being the [Tarlton Law Library](#), the [Dolph Briscoe Center for American History](#), and the [Harry Ransom Center](#) — and has more than 10 million titles and two million e-books. UT Libraries has 12 [facilities](#) (nine circulating libraries and three storage facilities) and occupies more than one million square feet of space. Its constitutive libraries include the [Perry-Castañeda Library](#) (the University's flagship research library), the [Architecture and Planning Library in Battle Hall](#) (currently under renovation), the [Benson Latin American Collection](#), the [Classics Library](#), the [McKinney Engineering Library](#), the [Fine Arts Library](#), the [Walter Geology Library](#), the [Life Sciences Library](#), and the [Kuehne Physics Mathematics](#)

[Astronomy Library](#). A strong corps of employees — more than 200 full-time librarians and staff and 250 students — work in these environments and represent the Libraries' most valued resource.

UT Libraries operates with a core recurring budget allocated by the Executive Vice President and Provost, along with supplemental funds allocated annually by the University of Texas System. The core recurring budget is approximately \$35 million. Notably, funding for collections has remained stable and included an increment for inflation. Also of note, the UT Libraries have raised \$10.5 million toward a \$12 million goal as part of the What Starts Here campaign, which runs through 2027.

Over the past decade, under the leadership of [Dr. Lorraine Haricombe](#), UT Libraries has steadily transformed its physical plant, renovating and refreshing spaces while respecting traditional design and architecture, building remote facilities, and working to address deferred maintenance. More than \$85 million has been invested in this effort, including \$30 million for enhancements to the Perry-Castañeda Library, such as the [Scholars Lab](#) and a Scholars Common for graduate students, the Life Sciences Library, and the Fine Arts Library. Battle Hall, which houses the Architecture and Planning Library and is one of the most architecturally significant buildings on the UT campus, is currently undergoing a historic restoration. A fourth remote storage facility will come online in early 2025.

The pride and joy of the UT Libraries is its collections. The world-renowned [Benson Latin American Collection](#) is one of the premier libraries in the world for Latin American Studies. The Benson is a global destination for research and study, with more than one million volumes and a wealth of original manuscripts, photographs, and various media related to Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, as well as the Latina/o presence in the United States and the Black diaspora in the Americas. Additionally, UT boasts some of the area's richest cultural resources that collaborate with the UT Libraries to advance the University mission. These include [UT Press](#), the [Harry Ransom Center](#), the [Briscoe Center for American History](#), and the [Blanton Museum of Art](#), and are highly regarded units that house collections, tools, and artifacts.

With such formidable collections, a central focus of the UT Libraries has been to champion and increase access to them. Accordingly, there have been significant efforts to stabilize and grow digital infrastructure. Over the last several years, UT has developed a new Digital Asset Management System and a [collections portal](#) that provides students, faculty, researchers, and the broader public convenient access to digital collections that were not readily available in the past. In 2019, the UT Libraries launched the [Texas GeoData portal](#) to expand access to geospatial data from its collections and allow researchers to more easily access geospatial data shared by other institutions.

UT Libraries is a member of the [Association of Research Libraries](#), the [Center for Research Libraries](#), the [Council on Library and Information Resources](#), the [Digital Library Foundation](#), the [Greater](#)

[Western Library Alliance](#), the [International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions](#), [SPARC](#), the [Texas Library Coalition for United Action](#), and [UT System Digital Library](#), among others.

A 20-member [Advisory Council](#) meets twice yearly in support of the Libraries. Advisory Council members serve as broadcasters, advocates, and supporters of the UT Libraries.

## **ROLE OF THE VICE PROVOST AND DIRECTOR**

The Vice Provost and Director is responsible for the overall direction and strategic vision of the UT Libraries, ensuring innovation and sustained excellence in the areas of library services, collections, operations and infrastructure, cooperative initiatives and outreach, resource management and fundraising, and workplace culture.

The Vice Provost and Director reports to the Executive Vice President and Provost. The VP and Director's Executive team includes:

- Director of the Benson Latin American Collection
- Director of Development
- Director of Research and Strategy
- Chief of Staff
- Director of Academic Engagement (responsible for UT Libraries' role as an essential partner in research, teaching, and scholarly communication)
- Director of Discovery and Access (overseeing access, content management, discovery and stewardship)
- Director of Organizational Effectiveness (overseeing facilities, information technology, budgeting and financial services, human resources, and assessment and communication)

The Directors of Academic Engagement, Discovery and Access, and Organizational Effectiveness make up the Vice Provost and Director's Council. Detailed information on the organizational structure can be found [here](#).

## KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PROVOST AND DIRECTOR

The next Vice Provost and Director for the UT Libraries will:

### *Provide visionary leadership for the UT Libraries.*

With colleagues within the Libraries and across the institution, the Vice Provost and Director will craft a vision that supports and advances UT's goal of becoming the highest-impact public research university in the world. One member of the UT Libraries said, "This is the decade of the University taking big swings." The VP and Director must be involved in those conversations.

The Vice Provost and Director will exhibit both institutional ambition and pragmatism, prioritizing and sequencing areas of focus and adapting as needed. The VP and Director should be well aware of — if not deeply versed in — developments in librarianship, technology, open initiatives, information and disinformation, artificial intelligence, as well as new and emerging disciplines, interdisciplinary work, and research methods. The VP and Director's vision should be centered on access, excellence in librarianship, service, and partnership to meet the expectations and needs of students, faculty members, and researchers.

### *Champion, broadcast, and connect.*

UT Libraries boasts excellent staff, stable funding, new and renovated facilities and spaces, significant investments in digital infrastructure, and strong fundraising results. The next Vice Provost and Director must champion the excellence of the Libraries and bring the organization into even closer collaboration with other units on campus, including the colleges and schools, the [Texas Advanced Computing Center](#); the Office of the Vice President for Research, Scholarship and Creative Endeavors; and the Office of the Vice President of Technology and Chief Information Officer. The VP and Director will continue to elevate the Libraries' presence, thereby raising awareness of how the work of the Libraries can support other units — as well as individual faculty members, students, and researchers — to achieve their strategic and intellectual goals.

In addition, the Vice Provost and Director will consistently, clearly, and effectively make the case for the Libraries in University forums and outside the University. A public presence for the Libraries, the VP and Director will seek to play an essential role in the University and Austin communities as an institutional citizen. The VP and Director will also leverage key relationships with entities such as the [Texas Academic Library Consortium](#), [Texas Digital Library](#), [Greater Western Library Alliance](#), the [University of Texas System Digital Library](#), and the [Center for Research Libraries](#), to increase access and resources for the benefit of UT Libraries' users. Historically, UT Libraries has played a leadership role in these groups and the library field as a whole, and it has simultaneously received significant

value from these partnerships. Maintaining and deepening these activities will ensure sustainability for a collaborative approach that maximizes impact.

***Elevate and accelerate open access and digital collections.***

UT Libraries has made robust investments in digital infrastructure, and the platforms are now ready for the expansion of digital collections. Faculty and students are eager for richer digital resources, even as demand for tangible materials has not waned. The Vice Provost and Director will devote attention and resources to this area and work with colleagues to craft a strategy for digital collections and preservation.

In late 2019, the Provost's Task Force on the Future of Libraries called for the establishment of a campus-wide task force to engage the community in developing strategies to support sustainable and open scholarship. The next Vice Provost and Director will revisit this effort and renew discussions around open scholarship in partnership with colleagues across the University. UT Libraries is poised for this work.

***Develop, lead, and inspire a strong, service-oriented set of librarians and staff.***

The shared and individual strengths of the employees of UT Libraries cannot be overstated. UT Libraries has been fortunate to benefit from unusual stability in its workforce; the Vice Provost and Director will join a seasoned and dedicated corps of personnel and ensure that the UT Libraries' employees are professionally fulfilled and challenged, deployed to their best advantage, and supported in their development and skills as information proliferates, technologies evolve, and libraries adapt. The VP and Director will also ensure that communications, coordination, and decision-making paths are strong; work to break down any barriers to collaboration across units arising from different systems and practices; and enable the entire organization to make progress on initiatives and celebrate collective achievements.

***Leverage, manage, and augment resources.***

The financial outlook, state of facilities, and strength of UT Libraries' workforce, taken together, mean that the Libraries are operating from a position of fundamental strength. At the same time, the University has ambitious goals, and the needs of users are ever-evolving. The costs associated with maintaining an outstanding library are significant; while the publicly accessible spaces of UT Libraries are in very good shape, attention to some mechanical infrastructure is needed.

The Vice Provost and Director will look ahead and plan for resources — human, physical, and financial — to ensure that excellence is sustained. In this work, the VP and Director will take a data-informed

approach and demonstrate the ability to formulate and communicate decisions with the transparency and clarity that comes from shared access to data. The VP and Director will also be a compelling storyteller and fundraiser, expanding the Libraries' financial foundation through philanthropic gifts and grants, thereby enabling the expansion of programs that benefit students and scholars.

## **PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

This position represents an outstanding opportunity for an experienced library leader with a record of innovative and collaborative leadership. The successful candidate will possess credentials appropriate to the leadership of a modern research-intensive library and a record of accomplishment in an academic discipline and/or library/information science. An advanced degree in library science and/or other graduate degree is strongly preferred.

In addition, the successful candidate will have many of the following professional experiences, qualifications, and characteristics:

***Professional experience and knowledge:*** Deep understanding of the higher education landscape and academic library ecosystem. Significant experience in a setting of similar complexity. A record of library leadership that shows a strong commitment to advancing library information technology and digital initiatives; intellectual capaciousness and sensitivity in supporting different and emerging disciplines, research, and creative activities; and depth of insight about open initiatives and scholarly publishing. A professional record that reflects the ability to view issues from an institution-wide perspective, foster teamwork across departments and divisions, and stimulate cross-unit collaboration.

***Leadership and management experience:*** Outstanding leadership abilities, including strategic visioning, an understanding of managing in complex and decentralized environments, and the ability to intuit and navigate decision-making paths and to execute. Adeptness in wielding budgetary levers and allocating/reallocating financial resources. Evidence of ability to position organizations to align with strategic priorities and institutional needs. Experience recruiting, developing, and retaining a skilled and dedicated workforce with different perspectives and backgrounds.

***Partnership and advocacy experience:*** A proven record of developing strong partnerships. The ability to advocate for resources. Experience in case-making and storytelling; direct or analogous experience and success in fundraising. Ability to build and leverage partnerships and collaborations with various units and organizations on campus and beyond. Engagement with leadership in the field.

***Personal characteristics and skills:*** Outstanding oral and written communication skills. The ability to engage the University community and external stakeholders broadly; a record of courageous decision making; clarity of thought; ability to maintain focus on priorities and how best to advance them. Ability to deepen connections with others. A record that testifies to the valuing of people. Evidence of intellectual flexibility: openness, adaptability, and willingness to countenance and manage change.

***Additional qualities:*** Collegiality, an orientation to teamwork, an inclination to servant leadership. Institutional ambition, personal humility. Ease with others. Dedication to public service, in keeping with the mission of a public university. Professional and personal integrity and ethics of the highest order.

## FOR CONSIDERATION

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and materials can be submitted electronically to:

[Search for the Vice Provost and Director of the University of Texas Libraries](#)

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