No timetable established for Pollak Library South reopening

BY SAMUEL MOUNTJOY – POSTED ON APRIL 16, 2014
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A correction was made to this story on May 5.

There is still no timeline for the reopening of Pollak Library South, which was closed due to damage caused by the magnitude 5.1 earthquake that struck Cal State Fullerton on March 28.

The university is working through its options for repairing the damage, all of which will lead to different timelines for when the library can reopen.

The cheapest option, estimated to cost $500,000, would stabilize and clean up the broken portions of the ceiling. After the ceiling is cleaned, the library would only be accessible by library staff wearing hard hats. Library books would only be retrievable through a paging system.

Restoring full access to the affected library areas would cost at least twice as much. The existing ceiling would be removed and overhead fixtures would be secured.

Replacing the ceiling, which would give a “like-new” appearance to the library, would cost $5 million.

Once the university determines an option, estimations will become clearer. The finalized strategy may include a combination of these options or a mix-and-match approach on different floors or parts of certain floors, a university official said.

The quake caused an estimated $500,000 in damage to areas other than the library.

Depending on how the university repairs the library, the cost is estimated to be as high as $6 million, totaling $6.5 million in damage to the campus overall.

Until it is determined which option will be used to restore the library, it will not be known when the closed half of the library can reopen.

Significant portions of library staff have been forced to relocate in the meantime. They have been inconvenienced, but are coping, a university official said.

Ingrid Garner, a theatre major and circulation worker at the library, said she is impressed with her coworkers who have helped to restore the library following the quake.

Many of the 1.3 million books in the library fell from their shelves, especially on the top three floors, but all of them have been picked up and placed on carts where they can be retrieved, she said.

“The main task at hand is putting those books back on the shelves in call number order,” Garner said. “We were getting a lot done at first, when we were first allowed back up there after everything was deemed safe, but now we’re only allowed up there for an hour at a time because the air conditioning has been turned off.”

An additional challenge is the fact that the entire circulation department has been moved to Pollak Library North while repairs are made, she said.

The paging system, which fetches books requested by students, has been a frustrating experience for students, but Garner said they have been understanding for the most part.
The service has been available for just three days, but a lot of students are using it, she said.

The library allots 24 hours for books to be found, and if the requested books cannot be located, they are automatically requested from another library through the interlibrary loan service.

As the recovery has progressed, Garner described the environment as bittersweet. Library employees are bonding through putting the library back together, but circulation workers who are graduating will not be able to see the library return to what it once was.

“It continues to be a very long process, and it’s kind of sad for us,” she said. “A lot of us are graduating this semester, so we’re never going to be able to see the library as it was, as we’ve experienced it for the past couple years, because we’ll be leaving.”

TAGS: Cal State Fullerton, CSUF, earthquake, Pollak Library, Puente Hills thrust fault, San Andreas Fault

About Samuel Mountjoy

Sam is a senior journalism major who has been working in student publications since high school. He was previously the editor-in-chief of a community college newspaper in the Palm Springs area. His first Titan byline came less than two months after he transferred to CSUF. Sam has been known to chase after sirens in hopes of a story, and hopes to soon become a professional news reporter.