

Minju Kim, Sunaina Butler, James O'Brien
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Analyzing an Organization using SWOT and PEST

INTRODUCTION

San José State University (SJSU) has just one library which doubles as the central branch for the San José public library system, serving 36,000 students as well as San José's one million residents (San José State University, 2013). Having a central library for the whole campus makes

it smaller in a sense, less dispersed, but also makes its reach and tasks larger. SJSU is diverse, mirroring the population of the Bay Area (San José State University, *Facts and Accomplishments*, 2025; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Seventy percent of students are from the Bay Area and almost half are first-generation college students.

Ethnicity	Percent Student Body	Percent San José Residents
Asian	36.1%	38.4%
Hispanic	28.2%	31.0%
White	14.1%	23.2%
Two or More Races	4.7%	3.66%
Black	3.3%	2.73%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.4%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0.01%	0.2%
International non-resident	9.7%	

In the strategic plan and across marketing materials, SJSU positions itself as a cutting-edge, technologically focused research institution which has a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The vision statement of the library is to develop “innovative services, spaces, and collections that inspire a globally impactful community of university leaders and scholars.” There is also the inclusion of words like global, international, and connection. It seems like SJSU has a desire to be internationally recognized as a serious institution while also wanting to

serve student needs (San José State University Library, 2022).

On the homepage of the website, there is a headline “A Transformative University” with a number of high rankings from publications like the U.S. News & World Report and the Wall Street Journal. There is also a news section on the main page. Currently, the top headline is “SJSU Receives R2 Research Designation” There are two other stories about social impact, including celebrating 20 years of the César E. Chávez Community Action Center and a career

fair. The final story is about the school of business being highly ranked recently (San José State University, *About*, 2025).

Interspersed with Instagram posts about the new research designation and photos of smiling students getting ready for commencement are posts with the hashtag “#STOPCSUCUTS” (San José State University, *About*, 2025). So while it seems the university is in a good place, budget cuts and a fight for higher education are not just incoming, but already here.

The King Library is also the central branch of the San José Public Library, which has a different feel and marketing. The title card says “You Belong: Whether you are new here or a seasoned pro...You belong at San José Public Library.” Since this is a public library instead of a university library, the events are focused on Mother’s Day, bike rides, and summer learning programs. It is positioned as community-centered, welcoming, and supportive (San José Public Library, *Home*, 2025).

SWOT ANALYSIS

Performing a SWOT analysis of this library gave us a clear perception of where the institution currently stands as well as where and how it can move from here.

Strengths

We feel that King Library is currently in a very strong position. Its budget has risen significantly in the past couple of years, coming from a years-long trend of hovering between 9 and 10 million annually to 13.6 million for the 2023-24 school year and 14.5 million for the current school year. This coincided with a large increase in the university’s total budget (Office of the Provost, 2025).

Perhaps this comes with being located in one of the global centers of technological development, Silicon Valley, but King Library is on the cutting edge of AI tools and their applications in library settings. They hired an AI librarian in February of this year and have launched a cutting-edge library retrieval augmented chatbot known as KingbotGPT (Seacrist, 2025).

The library also offers unique resources for its students that support the university’s engineering and technology focus such as the King Library Experimental Virtual Reality Lab that allows students the opportunity to work with AR and VR technologies as well as the Materials Library, a collection of 500 different physical material samples that are indexed and described in detail in a digital database (San José State University, *Dr.*, 2025).

Weaknesses

The main weakness that we currently see in King Library is its usage statistics, which declined significantly during the pandemic and have not recovered. For example, yearly reference transactions were well over 10,000 until 2022, but they have since dropped to the low 7,000 and have remained stable there even after pandemic restrictions were lifted (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 2025).

In-person library visits have also not returned to pre-pandemic levels, and interlibrary loan borrowing and lending remain significantly curtailed. The library's equipment lending service dropped to essentially zero in 2020, and while it has recovered every year since then, it is still at only 58% of its pre-pandemic level (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 2025).

Opportunities

One of the big opportunities presented to the library that we feel it has been proactive to take advantage of is SJSU's Transformation 2030 plan which aims to shift the university towards a public research institution and build greater connections with the broader San José community (San Jose State University, Transformation, 2025).

The library has noted its plan to support these activities with more scholarly collections, programs to help students explore their research potential, as well as publishing support. There is great potential here for the library to grow into new roles that support the goals of the university more broadly (San José State University Library, 2022).

There is also an opportunity for the library to shift towards a focus on digital collections and scholarship. The library's usage statistics already demonstrate that digital resources are increasingly popular, especially relative to the library's physical resources (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 2025). This could be seen as a chance for King Library to shift its collections strategy to support the new needs of students and remain modern, rather than finding themselves in 10 years with an outdated collection that is not useful to their patrons.

Threats

Universities and research institutions are under massive threat due to the political situation in the United States currently, and this also includes SJSU, especially as it is in the middle of a transition that would increase the amount of research happening at the university.

King Library is also potentially threatened by the increased collections budget that is necessitated by shifting toward digital materials. Purchasing access to databases and ebook licenses tends to be more expensive for libraries of all kinds than purchasing physical materials. King's usage statistics suggest that digital materials are growing in popularity and that now more

students visit the library digitally than in person. Prioritizing digital resources in this context is a sensible decision, but also means that the collections budget must be handled very carefully.

PEST ANALYSIS

When we started looking into the external environment around San José State University Library, I didn't expect so many different factors to be influencing its operations. But once we broke it down using the PEST model, it became pretty clear how much context matters.

Politics

Politically, one of the biggest things we noticed is how California pushes for diversity and inclusion, especially in public education. That pressure trickles down to places like the library, where they're expected to reflect those values (San José State University Library, 2022), not just in their collections, but also in how they serve students. It sounds good, and it does open doors to state funding or public support. But we also know that state policies can shift quickly, and when funding priorities change, libraries can feel the hit fast.

Economics

The economic situation is a bit more complicated. Yes—being in Silicon Valley means the library could collaborate with tech companies or apply for industry grants, which sounds like a big advantage. However, living in San José is expensive. I've met several students here in Washington State who choose to live farther from campus to reduce housing costs. Because of the distance, they aren't able to visit campus regularly, which sometimes limits their participation in events or access to resources. So even when the library develops excellent programs, not everyone is in a position to fully benefit from them.

Culture

Culturally, I think the city's diversity is both a huge opportunity and a challenge. Students speak a wide mix of languages and a lot of students are navigating college as the first in their families to do so (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). That's a powerful thing, but it also makes us wonder how well the library is reaching them, and whether its services truly match their needs. If services aren't inclusive in more than just name, students may quietly choose not to engage.

Technology

And then there's the technology piece. The library is doing a lot with digital tools, such as Open Educational Resources (OER) and support for hybrid learning (San José State University Library, 2022). That's great, especially for people who can't afford textbooks. But technology

moves fast. Having all the digital tools is one thing, but without regular staff training or solid infrastructure, we are not sure they'll be used the way they're supposed to be.

Doing this analysis made it clear to us that libraries are shaped just as much by what's happening around them as by what's going on inside. Every outside change—even small ones—can have a real impact inside.

CONCLUSION

The SWOT and PEST analysis have different foci, so we came away with multiple understandings of the same institution. The weaknesses, opportunities, and threats all come from the evolving needs and usage of the library. Students are using the library less in person and more online since the beginning of the pandemic; it has less reference transactions and in-person visitors than it did in the past while visitors to the library website are higher than ever. They have taken the opportunity to expand digital scholarly collections and connect patrons with resources online. Digital materials cost much more than physical materials and in the current political climate, public universities are at risk for funding loss. However, the library budget has had significant budget increases in the past couple of years. They are in a process of defining themselves as a cutting edge research university, and are overall in a strong position to do so.

The PEST analysis allows us to focus more on the users and the environment, rather than the library itself, which explains some findings in the SWOT. Since students may not be able to afford to live in San José, it may be difficult for them to engage in campus life, and may partially account for fewer in-person visitors. California's tech industry as well as a strong emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, are well placed as SJSU also has goals to emphasize inclusion and create and use new technology. In order to meet their student's needs, they have to be highly effective—the university's multicultural student population requires responsive, inclusive library services that go beyond surface-level representation. Furthermore, they must invest continually in digital infrastructure and regular staff training is essential to fully leverage tools like OER and support evolving learning needs. Both analyses align closely with the library's strategic plan, which emphasizes inclusive service, digital transformation, and continuous adaptation to meet the evolving needs of its diverse academic and local communities.

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APPENDIX A - SWOT TABLE

Strengths -What do you do well? -What unique resources can you draw on? -What do others see as your strengths?	Weaknesses -What could you improve? -Where do you have fewer resources than others? -What are others likely to see as weaknesses?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connects SJSU to the public library and broader community • Cutting-edge AI reference tools • CSU+ gives students access to 29 million titles • Unique resources for students like the Materials Library and the Affordable learning solutions initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage statistics are down significantly since the pandemic • This includes a reduction in in-person visits, reference transactions, use of physical library materials, and equipment lending while the number of students has remained stable
Opportunities -What opportunities are open to you? -What trends could you take advantage of? -How can your strengths be leveraged into opportunities?	Threats -What threats could harm you? -What is your competition doing? -What trends do your weaknesses expose you to?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing into a new role to support SJSU's transition towards a research university, including scholarly collections and publishing support • Supporting multidisciplinary digital scholarship as digital materials use has continued to trend upward since the pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library collections budget could be threatened by the transition towards digital collections and the costly licenses that they require • Failure to adapt to changing patron needs could result in a collection dominated by physical items that see little to no use

APPENDIX B - PEST TABLE

	FACTOR	OPPORTUNITY	THREAT
POLITICAL	California's higher education Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion mandates.	Federal and state initiatives promote digital equity and expand access to learning resources.	Changes in policy or funding levels can reduce the library's capacity to deliver services.
ECONOMIC	High cost of living in Silicon Valley.	Being located in Silicon Valley offers unique opportunities for partnerships and funding.	High living costs in the region undermine equitable access and strain library resources.
SOCIO-CULTURAL	Growing multilingual and first-generation student population.	Growing community diversity drives the development of inclusive programs and services.	Cultural and language barriers hinder meaningful participation from diverse communities.
TECHNOLOGICAL	Expansion of OER and hybrid digital learning infrastructure.	The adoption of digital platforms and OER increases accessibility and flexibility in learning.	Fast-paced technological change challenges the library's ability to adapt and train staff effectively.