

# UCSF Publishes Anti-Biotech Propaganda, Refuses to Answer Questions



By Alex Berezow — June 20, 2018



University of California  
San Francisco

**Library**

UCSF

Should a public university, which derives much of its funding from state and federal government, be in the business of using that taxpayer money to fund a project whose sole purpose is to besmirch the reputation of scientists, including those of other public universities?

That's the dubious position in which the University of California-San Francisco (UCSF) finds itself. And those in charge of the project won't answer any questions about it.

UCSF operates an online archive called the [Industry Documents Library](#) [1]. Its "About" page begins with this ominous warning:

*Increasingly, connections are being made between tactics taken by the tobacco industry and other corporations that influence public health, particularly on the issues of food, climate change and pharmaceuticals.*

In other words, because tobacco companies lied about the dangers of smoking decades ago, UCSF believes the same to be true today of the chemical, pharmaceutical, and biotech industries. As Carl Sagan said, "Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence." But instead of providing evidence, their only "proof" is thousands of documents hand-picked for them by U.S. Right to Know (USRTK), a trade group representing the organic food industry.

It's even worse than it sounds. As we [wrote previously](#) [2], USRTK's primary beneficiary, the Organic Consumers Association, also:

*...publishes anti-vaccine propaganda [3], promotes alternative medicine [4], lies about nuclear power [5], and peddles all sorts of conspiracy theories, including 9/11 trutherism [6], chemtrails [7], and FEMA's secret plan to implement martial law [8].*

There have been e-mails exchanged between USRTK and anti-industry professors, some of whom work for UCSF. For example, here is an [exchange](#) [9] between USRTK's Carey Gillam, an [anti-glyphosate activist](#) [10], and anti-chemical activist and UCSF Professor Tracey Woodruff. [Dr. Woodruff is who negotiated funding](#) [11] for the UCSF Industry Documents Library by working with Rachel's Network, a group of environmental activists, which is [run by a former lawyer for Earthjustice](#) [12], another group of environmental activists. Now, these environmental activists are able to wrap their anti-industry agenda with the veneer of credibility due to their association with UCSF.

Is any of this a part of the UCSF archive? Of course not. Instead, you can find hundreds of pages worth of [e-mails from Kevin Folta](#) [13], a plant biotech scientist who once committed the egregious crime of accepting a \$25,000 grant from Monsanto.

# Industry Documents

@industrydocs

A library of millions of internal documents created by industries that harm public health, hosted by the @ucsf\_library

 industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu

 Joined June 2009

The message

from UCSF is crystal clear: Collaborating with industry is evil, unless it's an industry it approves of. And UCSF approves of the organic industry, but not the chemical, pharmaceutical, or biotech industries.

Outrageously, the Industry Documents Library has its own Twitter feed that brazenly declares to be "a library of millions of internal documents created by ***industries that harm public health***" (emphasis added). UCSF -- acting in its self-appointed role as judge, jury, and executioner -- has

declared that chemistry, pharmacology, and biotechnology are dangers to public health.

### **No Accountability from UCSF**

Given this unabashed display of hypocrisy, I contacted Chris Shaffer, UCSF's University Librarian, with a list of pointed questions:

*1) Have you verified the authenticity of the documents?*

*2) Are you aware that USRTK is funded by the Organic Consumers Association, an outlet that actively promotes anti-vaccine propaganda and conspiracy theories, such as 9/11 trutherism? What are your thoughts on that?*

*3) What is the purpose of the library? USRTK's mission is to label GMOs, and my reporting has shown that their chosen method of accomplishing this is by defaming biotech scientists. Does UCSF endorse USRTK's mission?*

*4) Did you consult with actual scientists at UCSF — some of whom probably have industry connections — prior to engaging in this project?*

*5) Who writes posts for your blog?*

<https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/blog/> <sup>[14]</sup>

*Given your interest in transparency, I find it curious that the blog posts are unsigned.*

Mr. Shaffer responded, but did not answer any of my questions. Instead, this was the response. Note that Tracey Woodruff was cc'ed on the letter, one of the professors at UCSF who has a personal interest in maintaining the Industry Documents Library, as long as it doesn't contain any of her relevant e-mails with the organic industry.

Dear Dr. Berezow,

This message is in response to your inquiry on June 11, 2018 regarding materials in the UCSF Library's Industry Documents Library. To our knowledge, the documents you describe were obtained as public records. Our faculty determined that the collection was worth maintaining in the research archives. Like everything in the Industry Documents Library, we simply make the documents freely available to all so that researchers can exercise their judgement and expertise in interpreting the documents in the broader context of available information and scientific inquiry.

Sincerely,



Chris Shaffer

University Librarian and Assistant Vice Chancellor

Cc: Tracey Woodruff, Director of the Program on Reproductive Health  
and the Environment  
Greta Schnetzler, Chief Campus Counsel, Associate General  
Counsel

### **"Transparency" Is Just Another Word for Propaganda**

UCSF, USRTK, and other anti-chemical, anti-pharmaceutical, and anti-biotech activists are interested in "transparency" only to the extent that it harms people they dislike and benefits people they do like. That's not "scientific inquiry," as Mr. Shaffer's letter states; it's propaganda.

Taxpayer funded propaganda, mind you.

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**Source URL:** <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/06/20/ucsf-publishes-anti-biotech-propaganda-refuses-answer-questions-13102>

**Links**

[1] <https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/about/overview/>

[2] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/04/17/organic-activists-new-conspiracy-pesticides-cause-school-shootings-12854>

[3] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/no-historical-benefit-vaccines-polish-study>

- [4] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/conventional-vs-alternative-medicine-explained>
- [5] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/hoax-eco-friendly-nuclear-energy>
- [6] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/cia-agent-confesses-deathbed-we-blew-wtc7-911>
- [7] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/why-chemtrail-conspiracy-real>
- [8] <https://www.organicconsumers.org/news/secret-fema-plan-use-pastors-pacifiers-preparation-martial-law>
- [9] [https://cdn.muckrock.com/foia\\_files/2018/06/19/.PRA\\_018-043\\_3\\_Pages.pdf](https://cdn.muckrock.com/foia_files/2018/06/19/.PRA_018-043_3_Pages.pdf)
- [10] <https://www.acsh.org/news/2018/05/01/glyphosate-carey-gillam-keeps-lying-early-and-often-12910>
- [11] <https://rachelsnetwork.org/glyphosate/>
- [12] <https://rachelsnetwork.org/fern/>
- [13] <https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/results/#q=folta&h=%7B%22hideDuplicates%22%3Atrue%2C%22>
- [14] <https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/blog/>