

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Academic libraries are those libraries associated with educational institutions above the K-12 level.

They include vocational schools, community colleges, four year colleges, universities, specialty institutions such as law or medical schools, and research institutes. Some academic libraries are open to the public and some are not. In Illinois, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois (CARLI <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/>) is the major consortium serving academic libraries, with 130 member libraries across the state. CARLI member libraries pay an annual membership fee which ranges from about \$2,000 to \$12,000 depending on enrollment and type.

Academic libraries focus on the needs of the students, faculty, and staff of their institutions. They provide the materials and services needed by their users. For example, a community college hospitality student may need access to cookbooks and trade magazines, while a senior engineering student may need to find engineering standards and study guides for certification exams. Academic libraries focus heavily on provision of electronic resources, particularly journals and e-books. Many users may not be able to visit the library in person, or may be enrolled in online courses located far from the physical library, so online access is crucial. Academic libraries may spend 90% of their collections budget on electronic resources. The academic library is also an important physical presence on many campuses, a spot where students gather to study, work together, and conduct research. This has led academic libraries to make many improvements to their facilities.

What do academic librarians do? They have many roles, from teaching students to use resources and conduct research to data management to developing and maintaining library collections. They buy materials, negotiate licenses, and manage archives. They provide hardware and software needed for research, create research guides, and do literature reviews. They digitize collections, develop and present programs, and conduct their own research. Plus more!

How are academic libraries administered and funded? They are normally part of a larger educational institution, with the library director reporting to a university administrator. The budget is generally allocated by the parent institution according to its priorities and procedures. An important funding consideration is that academic library budgets have generally been flat or declining, while the cost of academic library materials has seen steady inflation of 3-7%. This has meant constant reductions in continuing expenditures such as journal subscriptions, which have to be paid every year.

Professional groups are important. Academic librarians love to learn from each other. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL <http://www.ala.org/acrl/>), a division of the American Library Association, is an important professional group for academic librarians, with over 10,000 members. In Illinois, the Illinois Association of College and Research Libraries (IACRL) is a forum of the Illinois Library Association. There are also many specialty associations, such as the American Association of Law Libraries and the Medical Library Association.

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