

Helping RAILS Libraries Tell Their Stories Campaign Survey
Preliminary Results for RAILS Board Advocacy Committee
March 2019

Introduction

RAILS is conducting a year-long campaign to help our member libraries of all types (academic, public, school, and special) to tell their stories and prove their value to their different stakeholders, including library users, prospective users, administrators, boards, funders, parent organizations, co-workers, legislators, and more.

The campaign is in direct response to the overwhelming number of requests for this type of assistance from RAILS members during our 2018 efforts to revise the RAILS strategic plan. The campaign will help us meet the second goal of our new strategic plan: *Work with libraries of all types to tell the library story.*

To help us focus our campaign activities, we conducted a survey of our members in February/March 2019 to find out more about the specific challenges they face in telling their stories/proving their value. We encouraged all interested staff members at all RAILS libraries to complete the survey.

We also made a special effort to get responses from nonpublic libraries, including publicizing the survey via:

- Articles in the weekly *RAILS E-News*
- RAILS mailing lists for academic, school, and special libraries
- RAILS mailing list for library directors (from any type of library)
- AISLE (Association of Illinois School Library Educators) mailing list
- Special Library Association – Illinois chapter mailing list
- Several Illinois academic library lists (thanks to the academic library representative on the RAILS Board)
- Contacting special libraries directly when we discovered that we were getting the lowest response rate from this group
- Asking RAILS Board members to help us publicize the survey

The preliminary results from the survey are included below. RAILS will continue to analyze the survey results to determine how we can best help our member libraries. In the meantime, there are several ways Advocacy Committee members might help with issues raised via the survey. See highlighted items below, followed by further explanation at the end of this document.

Survey respondents

Number/percentage of respondents by library type

Type of Library	Total # of Libraries Agencies/Buildings	Number of Responses*
Academic	123/174	48
Public	412/472	210
School	558/3,134	85
Special	193/203	36

*The number of responses is not a true reflection of the number of libraries of each type that participated, since all staff members at all libraries were invited to complete the survey.

Major challenges

Ranking of challenges identified by all survey respondents as major challenges

Challenge	Number	Percent
Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	182	49%
Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet	126	34%
Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure my library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders	119	32%
Having little or no money to spend on promoting/marketing the library	119	32%
Making people more aware of the library's digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)	98	27%
Figuring out the best promotional channels to use to best convey the different messages about my library	93	25%
Not having any marketing expertise on staff	80	22%
Making sure that current library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	79	21%
Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general	74	20%
Using the library website to tell my library's story more effectively	72	19%
Describing my library's programs/services in a more compelling way	66	18%
Helping all library staff to see their role in promoting the library	62	17%
Using social media to tell my library's story more effectively	60	16%
Creating a social media strategy for my library	58	16%
Developing talking points about my library to use with different audiences or stakeholders	54	15%

Challenge	Number	Percent
Developing a very short (approximately 60 seconds) “elevator speech” to use when someone asks why they should use my library	51	14%
Collaborating with other libraries to share knowledge and best practices related to telling the library story	48	13%

Ranking of challenges identified by academic library respondents as major challenges

Challenge	Number	Percent
General challenges		
Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	21	46%
Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure my library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders	19	42%
Making sure that current library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	19	41%
Having little or no money to spend on promoting/marketing the library	17	38%
Figuring out the best promotional channels to use to best convey the different messages about my library	17	37%
Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet	16	36%
Describing my library’s programs/services in a more compelling way	14	30%
Making people more aware of the library’s digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)	11	25%
Not having any marketing expertise on staff	11	25%
Helping all library staff to see their role in promoting the library	10	22%
Using social media to tell my library’s story more effectively	10	22%
Developing talking points about my library to use with different audiences or stakeholders	8	18%
Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general	8	18%
Using the library website to tell my library’s story more effectively	8	18%
Creating a social media strategy for my library	7	16%
Collaborating with other libraries to share knowledge and best practices related to telling the library story	7	16%
Developing a very short (approximately 60 seconds) “elevator speech” to use when someone asks why they should use my library	7	15%
Academic library-specific challenges		
Demonstrating the library’s impact on student success (improved retention and graduation rates)	28	62%

Challenge	Number	Percent
Ensuring that I am brought to the decision-making table when something related to my library is being discussed	25	56%
Making administrators aware of the library's value	21	47%
Making the faculty and other university/college staff aware of what the library can do for them	19	42%
Making students aware of what the library can do for them	18	40%
Articulating how the library advances the mission/goals of the parent institution	14	31%

Ranking of challenges identified by public library respondents as major challenges

Challenge	Number	Percent
General challenges		
Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	125	61%
Having little or no money to spend on promoting/marketing the library	66	32%
Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure my library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders	66	32%
Making people more aware of the library's digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)	64	31%
Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet	54	26%
Figuring out the best promotional channels to use to best convey the different messages about my library	54	26%
Not having any marketing expertise on staff	45	22%
Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general	41	20%
Helping all library staff to see their role in promoting the library	41	20%
Using the library website to tell my library's story more effectively	39	19%
Making sure that current library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	35	17%
Developing a very short (approximately 60 seconds) "elevator speech" to use when someone asks why they should use my library	27	13%
Developing talking points about my library to use with different audiences or stakeholders	27	13%
Creating a social media strategy for my library	27	13%
Using social media to tell my library's story more effectively	27	13%
Describing my library's programs/services in a more compelling way	26	13%
Collaborating with other libraries to share knowledge and best practices related to telling the library story	24	12%

Challenge	Number	Percent
Public library-specific challenges		
Demonstrating to taxpayers the value they receive from the library for their tax dollars	60	30%
Forming partnerships with other organizations to build a stronger and more informed support base in the community	35	17%
Working with local media to promote the value of the library	34	17%
Providing board members with talking points and key messages they can share with others in the library community	33	16%
Promoting the value of the library to the board of trustees	7	3%

Ranking of challenges identified by school library respondents as major challenges

Challenge	Number	Percent
General challenges		
Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet	46	54%
Having little or no money to spend on promoting/marketing the library	31	36%
Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure my library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders	26	31%
Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general	23	27%
Creating a social media strategy for my library	23	27%
Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	22	26%
Describing my library's programs/services in a more compelling way	22	26%
Using social media to tell my library's story more effectively	22	26%
Not having any marketing expertise on staff	21	25%
Making people more aware of the library's digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)	20	24%
Using the library website to tell my library's story more effectively	19	22%
Figuring out the best promotional channels to use to best convey the different messages about my library	18	21%
Developing talking points about my library to use with different audiences or stakeholders	17	20%
Making sure that current library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	16	19%
Collaborating with other libraries to share knowledge and best practices related to telling the library story	16	19%
Developing a very short (approximately 60 seconds) "elevator speech" to use when someone asks why they should use my library	14	16%
Helping all library staff to see their role in promoting the library	9	11%

Challenge	Number	Percent
School library-specific challenges		
Ensuring that I am brought to the decision-making table when something related to my library is being discussed	33	40%
Making school administrators aware of the value/benefits of the school library	29	35%
Demonstrating the need for a certified school librarian at my school	25	30%
Advocating for the continued existence of my school library	25	30%
Articulating how my library contributes to the school's mission and goals	23	28%
Making parents aware of the value of the school library	18	22%
Making students aware of what the library can do for them	15	18%
Making teachers aware of what the library can do for them	14	17%

Ranking of challenges identified by special library respondents as major challenges

Challenge	Number	Percent
General challenges		
Making sure that potential library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	14	40%
Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet	10	29%
Making sure that current library users/customers are aware of all the library has to offer for them	9	26%
Figuring out the best way to evaluate and measure my library programs/services to demonstrate their impact on different library stakeholders	8	23%
Using the library website to tell my library's story more effectively	6	17%
Having little or no money to spend on promoting/marketing the library	5	14%
Describing my library's programs/services in a more compelling way	4	11%
Figuring out the best promotional channels to use to best convey the different messages about my library	4	11%
Developing a very short (approximately 60 seconds) "elevator speech" to use when someone asks why they should use my library	3	9%
Making people more aware of the library's digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)	3	9%
Not having any marketing expertise on staff	3	9%
Developing talking points about my library to use with different audiences or stakeholders	2	6%
Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general	2	6%
Helping all library staff to see their role in promoting the library	2	6%

Challenge	Number	Percent
Creating a social media strategy for my library	1	3%
Using social media to tell my library's story more effectively	1	3%
Collaborating with other libraries to share knowledge and best practices related to telling the library story	1	3%
Special library-specific challenges		
Being visible in the parent organization	11	32%
Demonstrating my library's value to leaders in the parent organization	10	29%
Ensuring that I am brought to the decision-making table when something related to my library is being discussed	9	26%
Articulating how my library contributes to company/parent organization mission and goals	8	24%
Advocating for the continued existence of my special library	7	21%
Promoting the value of my library to colleagues in my company/organization	6	18%
People not understanding what a "special library" is	3	9%

Possible Recommendations for RAILS Board Advocacy Committee

General Challenges Identified by Survey Respondents

1. “Overcoming the misconception that libraries are no longer needed because of the internet,” was ranked in the top five of major challenges for all survey respondents, and for every type of library respondent except for academic libraries. (Academic libraries rated this challenge #6.) It was ranked as the #1 general major challenge by school libraries.

Advocacy Committee members and the RAILS Board can highlight why libraries are even more important in the age of the internet by using some of the following talking points in conversations with other trustees, library customers or potential customers (at any type of library), legislators, and other stakeholders.

- A lot of information is not available for free on the internet, including journals, most books, academic research papers, and other important materials. All of this information is available through libraries.
 - Librarians are the best search engines. They can help you evaluate the information you find on the internet to ensure you are using the best resources. They can also help you sift through “fake news.”
 - Many people do not have access to the internet at home. Their only point of access is at the library.
2. “Making people more aware of the library’s digital resources (e-books, online databases, etc.)” was ranked as a top five challenge among all survey respondents and as the #4 challenge for public library respondents.

Since almost all libraries provide digital resources, this is something that Advocacy Committee and RAILS Board members can promote in interactions with current and potential library customers, legislators, and others.

Many of the same talking points referenced above can be used to promote these resources. Databases are a perfect example of the type of information that is not available for free on the internet. They are also an example of a resource that many will not have access to – except through their library, whether it be an academic, public, school, or special library.

3. “Talking to legislators/elected officials about the importance of supporting my library or libraries in general” was ranked as the #4 major challenge by school library respondents.

Though this was not rated as a top five major challenge by other respondents, Advocacy Committee members can use any interaction with elected officials to speak out for libraries of all types. The attached talking points from the American Library Association can help with these efforts.

Specific Library Type Challenges Identified by Survey Respondents

Academic Libraries

- “Demonstrating the library’s impact on student success (improved retention and graduation rates)”

The five numbered points in the attached Executive Summary of the *Academic Library Impact on Student Learning and Success* report can be used in any discussions with academic library stakeholders.

Public Libraries

- “Demonstrating to taxpayers the value they receive from the library for their tax dollars”

The attached talking points from the American Library Association can be used in any discussions with public library stakeholders.

School Libraries

- “Demonstrating the need for a certified school librarian at my school”

The attached talking points from the American Library Association can be used in any discussions with school library stakeholders.

Special Libraries

- “People not understanding what a “special library” is”

The attached talking points from the American Library Association can be used in any discussions with special library stakeholders.

Quotable Facts About America's Libraries – January 2019

DID YOU KNOW?

The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with more than 167 million items on approximately 838 miles of bookshelves, which would span roughly the distance from The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., to Cape Canaveral, Florida.

Library of Congress Fascinating Facts (<https://www.loc.gov/about/fascinating-facts/>)

Libraries are a smart investment. A recent study shows that for every dollar spent on Ohio public libraries, Ohioans received \$5.48 in economic value.

Return of Investment on Ohio's Public Libraries: http://olc.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/post-id_2060/2016/04/Ohio-Public-Libraries-ROI-Report.pdf

A growing body of evidence suggests that students' academic success is linked to library usage, including improved student retention and an enhanced academic experience.

*Academic Library Impact on Student Learning and Success: Findings from the Assessment in Action Team Projects
http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/value/findings_y3.pdf*

Libraries play a critical role in the happiness of Americans. Communities that spend more on libraries, parks and highways are shown to support the well-being of community members.

Patrick Flavin. State government public goods spending and citizens' quality of life. Social Science Research, 2018; DOI: [10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.11.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2018.11.004)

Americans go to public libraries more often than they go to the movies.

*From 2016 PLS: 1,353,081,000 public library visits per year
(Public Libraries Survey, FY 2016, Table 8, Supplementary Tables
https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2016_pls_tables.pdf)*

1.24 billion movie admissions in 2017 (https://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MPAA-THEME-Report-2017_Final.pdf)

Librarians have long championed their community members' right to access information privately, and serve as an essential refuge where everyone can check out materials or browse the internet without their information being shared.

Mary Madden, Lee Rainie. Pew Research Center, May 20, "Americans' Attitudes About Privacy, Security and Surveillance." Available at:

<http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/05/20/americans-attitudes-about-privacy-security-and-surveillance/>

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

There are more public libraries than Starbucks in the U.S. – a total of 16,568, including branches. Nearly 100% of public libraries provide Wi-Fi and have no-fee access to computers.

There are 16,568 total libraries including branches in the U.S. per 2016 PLS survey (Public Libraries Survey, FY 2016, Table 3 of the Supplemental Tables

https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2016_pls_tables.pdf

[2018 Starbucks: 14,606 corporate and licensed locations within the USA. Source: Starbucks Corporate Customer Relations, 12/28/2018]

In 2016, there were 1.4 billion in-person visits to public libraries across the U.S., the equivalent of about 4 million visits each day. That's 2,664 per minute.

From 2016 PLS: 1,353,081,000 public library visits per year

(Public Libraries Survey, FY 2016, Table 8, Supplementary Tables

https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2016_pls_tables.pdf

There were 113 million attendees at public library programs in 2016, more than all Major League Baseball, National Football League, and NBA games combined. That's 16.5 million more than in 2013.

From 2016 PLS: Total program attendance: 113,078,000

(Public Libraries Survey, FY 2016, Table 11, Supplementary Tables

https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2016_pls_tables.pdf

From 2016 PLS: Total program attendance: 96,541,000

(Public Libraries Survey, FY 2016, Table 11, Supplementary Tables

https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/fy2013_pls_tables_8_thru_18a.pdf

Public Libraries in the United States Survey: Fiscal Year 2013. March, 2016.

<https://www.ims.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/plsfy2013.pdf>

National Football League attendance 2017: 17,253,425 (Source: ESPN.com, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/years/2017/attendance.htm>)
Major League Baseball attendance 2018: 72,678,797 (Source: ESPN.com, <https://www.baseball-reference.com/leagues/MLB/2018-misc.shtml>)
National Basketball League attendance 2017-2018: 22,128,921 (Source: ESPN.com, <http://www.insidehoops.com/attendance.shtml>)

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Everyone in a college benefits from the college library, yet they receive fewer than two cents of every dollar spent on higher education.

Total Academic Library Expenditures (iPEDS/National Center for Education Statistics, 2018): \$8,293,263,695

Data generated from NCES IPEDS Statistical Tables. Visit link at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionlist.aspx?stepId=1>

*Total Expenditures for Public Higher Education Institutions, 2015-2016:
\$354,696,909,000*

(Digest of Education Statistics, Table 334.10

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_334.10.asp?current=yes)

*Total Expenditures for Private Nonprofit Higher Education Institutions, 2015-2016:
\$188,698,325,000*

(Digest of Education Statistics, Table 334.70

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_334.70.asp?current=yes)

*Total Expenditures for Private For-Profit Higher Education Institutions, \$16,009,382,000
(Digest of Education Statistics, Table 334.70*

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_334.70.asp?current=yes)

$8,293,263,695 / (559,404,616,000) = \$.014$

Academic libraries have almost 2.5 billion physical and electronic items in their collections available for use.

Data generated from NCES IPEDS Statistical Tables. Visit link at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionlist.aspx?stepId=1>

Digital media titles in U.S. academic libraries have increased by 50% since 2014.

Data generated from NCES IPEDS Statistical Tables. Visit link at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/institutionlist.aspx?stepId=1>

Academic librarians provide information services for almost 38 million people each year – reaching more than four million people that attend men's college basketball games.

NCES ALS report 2012 Table 3: Reference transactions (services to individuals) – 28,856,409 per year; individuals served in groups = 10,109,738 -- total served 38,966,147 [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014038.pdf]

*NCAA Division 1 men's basketball attendance total: 24,525,640
Source: NCAA Annual Attendance Report, 2018
http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/stats/m_basketball_RB/2019/Attendance.pdf*

SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Students in high-poverty schools are almost twice as likely to graduate when the school library is staffed with a certified school librarian.

*The five year graduation rate in high poverty schools was 78.8% “five-year” graduation rate versus 43.2% without a certified teacher-librarian. (Coker, E., 2015)
Coker, E. (2015). Certified Teacher-Librarians, Library Quality and Student Achievement in Washington State Public Schools. [PDF document]. Retrieved from
https://wala.memberclicks.net/assets/WLMA/Advocacy/wslitreport_final%20revised7_14_15.pdf*

Cutbacks in school librarians may be yielding unintended consequences. According to a recent study by Stanford University, more than 80% of middle schoolers cannot tell the difference between sponsored content and a real news article.

*“Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning.” Stanford History Education Group, November 2016. Available at:
<https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%2011.21.16.pdf>*

Research shows the highest achieving students attend schools with well-staffed and well-funded school libraries.

*Increased library staff links to higher CSAP scores (2010) 2010
http://www.lrs.org/documents/fastfacts/287_CO3_Staffing_Test_Scores.pdf
Michael Ratlick and Joette Stefl-Mabry. “Finally-Convincing Evidence for the Impact of School Librarians?” Presented at the American Educational Research Association Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, April 18, 2015
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280317668_Radlick_M_Stefl-Mabry_J_2015_April_16-20_Finally_-_Convincing_Evidence_for_the_Impact_of_School_Librarians_Paper_presented_at_the_American_Educational_Research_Association_Chicago_IL*

Students make almost 1.3 billion visits to school library media centers during the school year, the same as attendance at movie theaters in 2014, or four times as many visitors to national parks.

School libraries dept of ed figures from ALA factsheet: 98,460

<https://www.ala.org/ala/professionalresources/libfactsheets/alalibraryfactsheet01.cfm>

ALA AASL School Libraries Count 2012: 313 visits (mean all responding libraries) times 42 weeks schools are in session = 13,146 visits times 98,460 (# of schools)= 1,294,355,160

Movie theater admissions US profile/media and Motion Picture Association 2014

Theatrical Market Statistics -- 1.27B admissions: <http://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2014.pdf>

2015-307,247,252 visitors to national parks

[https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20Summary%20Report%20\(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year\)](https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/SSRSReports/National%20Reports/Annual%20Visitation%20Summary%20Report%20(1979%20-%20Last%20Calendar%20Year))

School libraries give students a unique opportunity for self-directed inquiry. Four out of five Americans agree that libraries help spark creativity among young people.

Horrigan, John B. "Libraries 2016" Pew Research Center, September 2016

Available at: www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/09/2016/Libraries

Lower-income students are especially at risk of falling behind in math and reading when school is out. Libraries help narrow the achievement gap by offering summer learning opportunities to kids of all backgrounds.

"Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning." Stanford History Education Group, November 2016. Available at:

<https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%202011.21.16.pdf>

LIBRARIES TRANSFORM

Libraries strengthen local economies.

- **84% of libraries offer technology training to patrons in computer software use;**
- **76.8% of libraries provide online health resources and 60% offer programs to help Americans identify health insurance resources and get better informed on health topics;**

- **73.1% of libraries provide programs that assist individuals apply for jobs, create resumes, and prepare for interviews;**
- **97% of libraries help people complete online government forms.**

Libraries create healthier communities.

- **77% of libraries offer online health resources.**
- **59% provide programs on finding health insurance.**
- **58% provide programs to help people find and evaluate health information.**
- **23% offer fitness classes.**

Libraries are the place for lifelong learning.

- **95% provide online homework assistance.**
- **95% offer summer reading programs for children.**

Library access equals opportunity.

- **100% of public libraries offer access to the Internet.**
- **98% of public libraries offer free Wifi.**
- **90% help patrons with basic Internet skills.**
- **97% help people complete online government forms.**
- **9 out of 10 libraries offer access to e-books.**

Bertot, J.C., Real, B., Lee, J., McDermott, A.J., & Jaeger, P.T. (201). 2014 Digital Inclusion Survey: Findings and Results. College Park, MD: Information Policy & Access Center, University of Maryland College Park. Available at <http://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/>.

<http://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/2014DigitalInclusionSurveyFinalRelease.pdf>

<http://www.ala.org/tools/research/digitalinclusion>

For more information about sources and citations, contact the ALA Library and Research Center at alalibrary@ala.org.

Learn more at www.librariestransform.org.

Sources:

**ALA Office for Library Advocacy
ALA Library and Research & Center
All facts compiled in 2019.**

For more information about America's Libraries visit www.ilovelibraries.org.

Made possible by the ALA Library Champions: www.ala.org/librarychampions

Office for Library Advocacy
American Library Association
50 E. Huron St., Chicago, Illinois, 60611
1.800.545.2433, x 2428
advocacy@ala.org

American Library Association, January 2019

ACADEMIC LIBRARY IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS:

Findings from Assessment in Action Team Projects

Executive Summary

Since 2013, over 200 postsecondary institutions of all types have participated in the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) Assessment in Action program (AiA) that created campus-wide partnerships at institutions to promote collaborative assessment and library leadership. The AiA program was launched by ACRL, in partnership with the Association of Institutional Research and the Association of Public Land-grant Universities, and with funding from the US Institute of Museum and Library Services.

At each participating institution, an AiA team, consisting of a librarian and at least two representatives from other campus departments or units, planned and implemented a project that aligned with institutional priorities and contributed to campus assessment activities. The extensive collection of assessment methods and tools used by the campus teams during the three-year AiA program point to multiple types of library factors and their potential impacts on students' academic outcomes. Higher education institutions are encouraged to replicate or adapt these approaches to expand understanding of student learning and to assess library contributions to academic outcomes at their institutions.

Compelling Evidence for Academic Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success

The higher education community now has compelling assessment findings that tell a strong story about the multiple ways that academic libraries are contributing to student learning and success. While each institutional context is unique and the AiA project findings about library impact are not generalizable to all academic settings, the demonstrations of positive connections between the library and aspects of student learning and success in five areas are particularly noteworthy. A more detailed discussion of the findings is available in the full report, *Academic Library Impact on Student Learning and Success: Findings from Assessment in Action Team Projects*, available online at http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/value/findings_y3.pdf.

1. *Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework.*

Information literacy instruction provided to students during their initial coursework helps them acquire a common set of competencies for their undergraduate studies. The assessment findings from numerous AiA projects that focused on information literacy initiatives for freshmen and new students underscore that students receiving this instruction perform better in their courses than students who do not.

2. *Library use increases student success.*

Several AiA studies point to increased academic success when students use the library. The analysis of multiple data points (e.g., circulation, library instruction session attendance, online database access, study room use, interlibrary loan) shows that students who used the library in some way achieved higher levels of academic success (e.g., GPA, course grades, retention) than students who did not use the library.

ACADEMIC LIBRARY IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS:

Findings from Assessment in Action Team Projects

3. Collaborative academic programs and services involving the library enhance student learning.

Academic library partnerships with other campus units, such as the writing center, academic enrichment, and speech lab, yield positive benefits for students (e.g., higher grades, academic confidence, retention).

4. Information literacy instruction strengthens general education outcomes.

Several AiA projects document that library instruction improves students' achievement of institutional core competencies and general education outcomes. The project findings demonstrate different ways that information literacy contributes to inquiry-based and problem-solving learning, including effective identification and use of information, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and civic engagement.

5. Library research consultations boost student learning.

One-on-one or small-group reference and research assistance with a librarian enhances academic success, as documented by such factors as student confidence, GPAs, and improved achievement on course assignments.

Having overall consistent assessment findings of library impact in these five areas—across a body of over 200 projects—is strong in part because of the variation. Each setting is unique; each library program and service differed in its design and implementation (as appropriate for that unique local context); students had many difference characteristics and backgrounds; there was a multiplicity of methods for investigating the library impact on students.

Because the assessment findings are derived from action research, which situates the investigations in authentic institutional contexts, the results reflect “on the ground” practices in terms of resources available and campus priorities. While libraries should routinely assess for internal improvement, findings from the AiA projects lessen the need to question whether investments of time, resources, and energy in these areas will bring about a positive impact.

Promising Evidence of Library Impact

The AiA projects continue to build evidence of library impact in other areas as well. Investigations in four areas point to evidence of promise. The assessment of library impact in these areas, however, tends not to have been investigated as extensively as those noted above or the findings may not be as consistently strong. Even so, the growing number of studies in these four areas have yielded promising results about positive connections between the library and students' academic success.

- *The library contributes to improved student retention.*
- *Library instruction adds value to a student's long-term academic experience.*
- *The library promotes academic rapport and student engagement.*
- *Use of library space relates positively to student learning and success.*

ACADEMIC LIBRARY IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS:

Findings from Assessment in Action Team Projects

Advancing Library Leadership through Action Research

The action research framework, which emphasized improving practice through systematic investigation of a question grounded in institutional context, engaged the librarians in an immersive process of ongoing interaction with one another and collaboration with their campus team members. The librarians led the design and implementation of assessment that related directly to their campus's academic priorities, creating opportunities for substantive conversations with campus stakeholders about student learning and resulting in meaningful findings that informed decision making about library programs and practices. The leadership qualities that were strengthened through this process include an awareness of the importance of inquiry and decision making grounded in institutional context, understanding and experience with the dynamic nature of assessment, and a recognition of the personal and professional growth that emerges through collaboration with others.

More Information

Read the full report, *Academic Library Impact on Student Learning and Success: Findings from Assessment in Action Team Projects*, for ideas and strategies that promote evidence-based demonstrations of an academic library's contributions to student learning and success. Visit, adapt, and use the assessment methods and tools developed by the AiA campus teams that are available in a searchable online collection at <https://apply.ala.org/aia/>.

About ACRL

The Association of College & Research Libraries is the higher education association for librarians. Representing nearly 11,000 academic and research librarians and interested individuals, ACRL (a division of the American Library Association) develops programs, products and services to help academic and research librarians learn, innovate and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning and transforming scholarship.