

The Value of Academic Libraries: Findings and Next Steps
Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, Association of College and Research Libraries
Mary Ellen Davis, Association of College and Research Libraries
CNI Project Briefings 2010 – Arlington, VA - December 13-14, 2010



ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Initiative

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) launched its Value of Academic Libraries Initiative to align libraries with institutional outcomes, empower libraries to carry out work locally, create shared knowledge and understanding, and contribute to higher education assessment. The first phase of this multi-year initiative is *The Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report*, released in September 2010.

Value of Academic Libraries Report

The ACRL *Value of Academic Libraries: A Comprehensive Research Review and Report* is a review of the quantitative and qualitative literature, methodologies and best practices currently in place for demonstrating the value of academic libraries, developed for ACRL by Megan Oakleaf of the iSchool at Syracuse University. The primary objective of this comprehensive review is to provide academic librarians with a clearer understanding of existing research about the performance of academic libraries, where gaps in this research occur, and to identify the most promising best practices and measures correlated to performance. The report describes the current state of the research on community college, college, and university library value and suggests focus areas for future research. The report emphasizes library value within the context of overarching institutions.

Findings

The report identifies significant existing library value research in the academic library literature as well as literature from school, public, and special libraries. Oakleaf and her research team identify relevant library value literature, including monographs, scholarly and trade articles, Web sites, statistical sources, data sources, white papers, and gray literature. A detailed summary and analysis of literature review findings is included in the report. Based on the literature review, Oakleaf extrapolates recommendations for how academic libraries should move forward in demonstrating their value, identifies potential surrogates for library value, and suggests possible areas of correlation to collectable library data.

Next Steps for Academic Libraries

The report identifies 10 steps academic libraries can take to demonstrate their value in the institutional context. These steps include defining outcomes, creating or adopting systems for assessment management, developing systems to collect data on individual library user behavior (while maintaining privacy), recording and increasing library impact on student enrollment, linking libraries to improved student retention and graduation rates, and creating library assessment plans.

Research Agenda

The report's Research Agenda lays out 10 specific areas of library value within the context of an institutional mission and/or outcomes: student enrollment, student retention and graduation, student success, student achievement, student learning, student experience, faculty research productivity, faculty grants, faculty teaching, and institutional reputation. For each area of library value, the Research Agenda identifies potential surrogates as well as potential areas of correlation.

Future and Related Projects

A Value of Academic Libraries Toolkit was released in October 2010 by the ACRL Assessment Committee to assist academic librarians in their efforts to bring visibility to the value that academic libraries provide to their users, institutions, and communities. In the coming months, ACRL will continue to move forward with creating professional development opportunities for training in methods to document and communicate value, revising the association's *Standards for Academic Libraries in Higher Education*, seeking funding for additional research, and providing opportunities for librarians to share their findings through conference presentations and publications.

More Information

The full Value of Academic Libraries report - along with supplemental materials, a podcast interview with ACRL President Lisa Hinchliffe and report author Megan Oakleaf, and additional information on the ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Initiative - is available online at www.acrl.ala.org/value.

Contact

Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, 2010-2011 ACRL President, ljanicke@illinois.edu
Mary Ellen Davis, ACRL Executive Director, mdavis@ala.org



The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) is a division of the American Library Association (ALA), representing more than 12,000 academic and research librarians and interested individuals. ACRL is the only individual membership organization in North America that develops programs, products, and services to meet the unique needs of academic and research librarians. Its initiatives enable the higher education community to understand the role that academic libraries play in the teaching, learning, and research environments. ACRL is on the Web at www.acrl.org/, Facebook at www.facebook.com/ala.acrl, and Twitter at [@ala_acrl](https://twitter.com/ala_acrl).