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# Academic Library Support for Open Initiatives

Highlights from the 2024 Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey

**A**CRL conducts the annual Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey to understand the evolving roles of libraries in higher education. The survey gathers crucial evidence on academic library staff, expenditures, collections, circulation, and information services. The data help librarians, administrators, and stakeholders assess the impact of academic libraries, make peer comparisons, and track trends over time. These results can also help libraries advocate their value with campus decision makers. Summary data are available to all participating libraries via ACRL Benchmark, and libraries with a full subscription can designate their own peer groups for tailored comparisons.

The Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board appreciates the many libraries that participated, especially first-time contributors, and strongly encourages continued participation at this historic moment given that the federal government will no longer collect academic library statistics, as described in the conclusion. As pressures mount within higher education, we must rely on ourselves to gather this crucial evidence so that we can tell compelling stories about the impact and value we bring to our communities.

Find instructions, worksheets, historical findings, helpful links, and FAQs on the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics LibGuide.<sup>1</sup> This article provides brief highlights from the 2024 annual survey results and a detailed look at the trends questions on library support for Open Initiatives.

## Highlights of Annual Survey Results

With 3,457 US institutions invited to participate and 1,367 completing the survey, the response rate of 39.5% is similar to prior years. Notably this year, the ACRL Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board approved a proposal to begin nonprobability sample weighting, which accounts for differences between the responding institutions and the full population of US institutions with academic libraries. The 2024 survey also included a special section with questions about accessibility for people with disabilities in library spaces and programs.

ACRL released a comprehensive report on the 2024 annual question results<sup>2</sup> and held a webinar,<sup>3</sup> and readers should refer to those resources for detailed analysis, figures, and a discussion of the weighting methodology. Here, then, are a few key findings:

**Expenditures:** In 2024, total annual library expenditures reached an average of \$2.1 million and median of \$487,000, excluding fringe benefits. About a third of the total is spent on ongoing commitments to subscriptions.

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**Staffing:** The average full-time equivalent (FTE) library staff is 19.4, and the median is 8. Doctoral universities have much higher staffing levels than institutions of other types. Associate's colleges and two-year institutions have the highest ratio of students to staff.

**Collections and circulation:** Of academic library collections, 79.6% are in digital or electronic format. Digital materials account for 93.2% of total circulation.

**Instruction:** More than half (54.8%) of presentations to groups happen synchronously, and those presentations account for 75.8% of total annual attendance.

**Accessibility:** Most academic libraries (90.2%) have an accessible main entrance, and inside the library, 94.4% have wheelchair-accessible hallways. However, only about half (51.6%) have computers with accessible technologies and software.

## Library Trends in Open Initiatives

The 2024 ACRL survey included nine questions on trends in academic library support for Open Initiatives. These questions and response options were developed by members of the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board with input from colleagues at SPARC. Given the evolving nature of Open Initiatives within the academic community, the following analysis provides a picture of how academic libraries are supporting Open Access scholarly communications and publishing, Open Educational Resources (OER), and other open Initiatives.

### Open Collections and Subscriptions with External Agreements or Initiatives

Overall, 46.7% of libraries had at least one external agreement or initiative to support Open collections and subscriptions, and there was great variation by institution type, as seen in Figure 1.

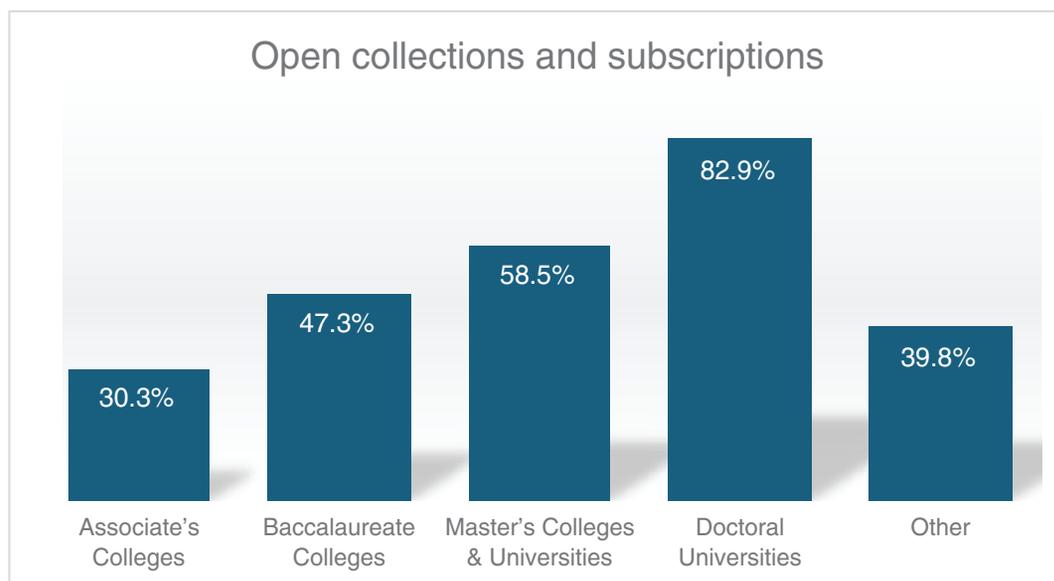


Figure 1. Proportion of academic libraries, by institution type, supporting Open collections and subscriptions with one or more external agreements or initiatives.

The response option with the highest overall support rate of 29.5% was subscribe to Open, Direct to Open, or other open access (OA) funding models for collections. Conversely, the

response with the lowest overall support rate of 10.7% was subscribing to services for making collections decisions (such as Unpaywall). There was great variability within response options by institution type. The highest rate for any response option was 71.1% of doctoral universities entering into transformative agreements with vendors (Read and-Publish, etc.). The lowest rate for any response option was 3.8% of other institutions subscribing to services for making collections decisions (such as Unpaywall).

### Open Internal Activities or Initiatives

Academic libraries overwhelmingly supported Open, with 77.2% having at least one internal activity or initiative in 2024. The most popular activity for all institution types was integrating Open Access or OER materials within the library catalog or ILS with an overall 67.9% of institutions, as shown in Figure 2, ranging from 55.6% of associate’s colleges to 85.0% of doctoral universities.

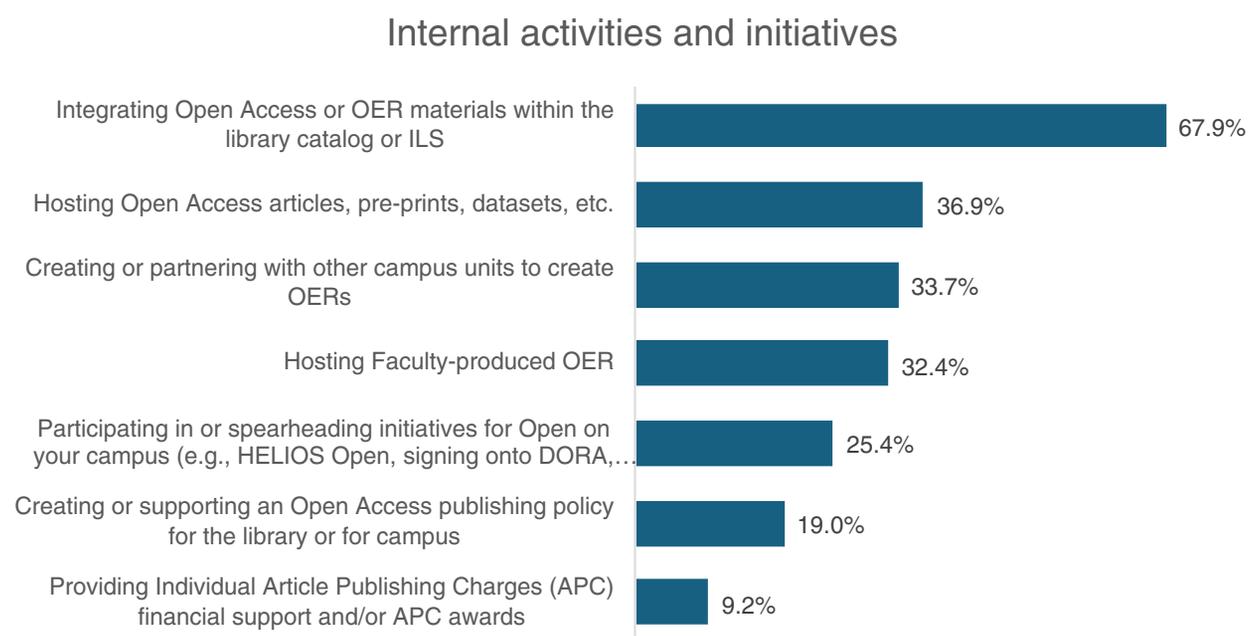


Figure 2. Internal activities and initiatives to support Open ranked by overall library support.

Because the topic of OER was the focus of prior trends questions in 2019, it’s worth examining the 2024 responses that are specifically about OER more closely:

- 67.9% integrate Open Access or OER materials within the library catalog or ILS.
- 33.7% of institutions create or partner with other campus units to create OERs.
- 32.4% host faculty-produced OER.

This 2024 rate of engagement is in line with 2019, when 65.3% of responding libraries (unweighted) were either involved with their institutional OER initiative or supported OER independently at the library, as shown in Figure 3.

Furthermore, in 2019 the top OER-related activities supported by libraries were:

- 83.9% searching for quality OER for faculty
- 82.6% creating subject guides or other educational materials on OER
- 78.5% advocating for library inclusion in OER activities on campus
- 76.4% training faculty and staff on OER

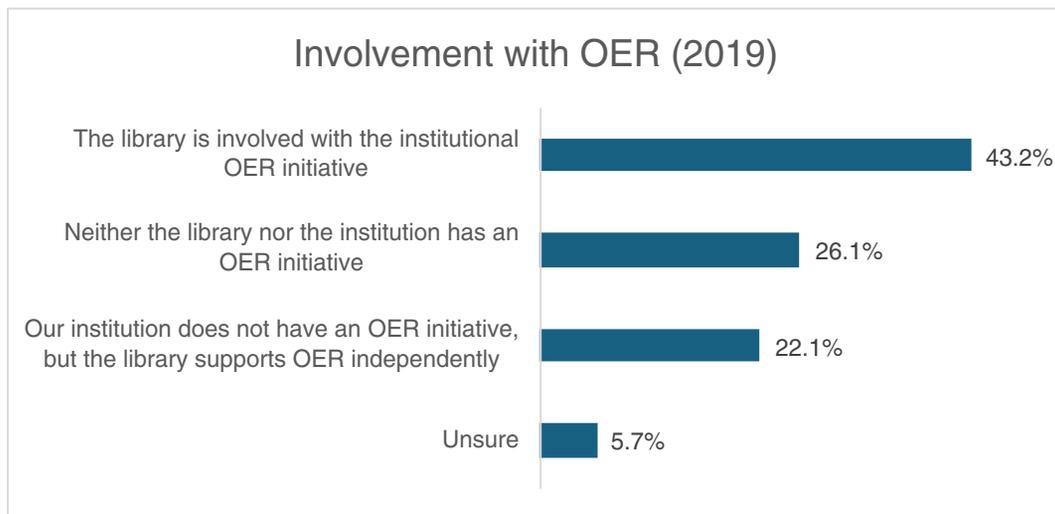


Figure 3. Involvement with OER (2019).

Since the focus in 2019 was on OER and in 2024 the focus was broadened to all types of Open Initiatives, the results are not directly comparable.

### Library-Provided Publishing Infrastructure

While the first two questions showed a majority of all US academic libraries participated in one or more activity during 2024, slightly less than half of libraries (48.5%) provided any type of publishing infrastructure (this specifically refers to nonarchival repositories). Again, there was variability by institution type, as seen in Figure 4.

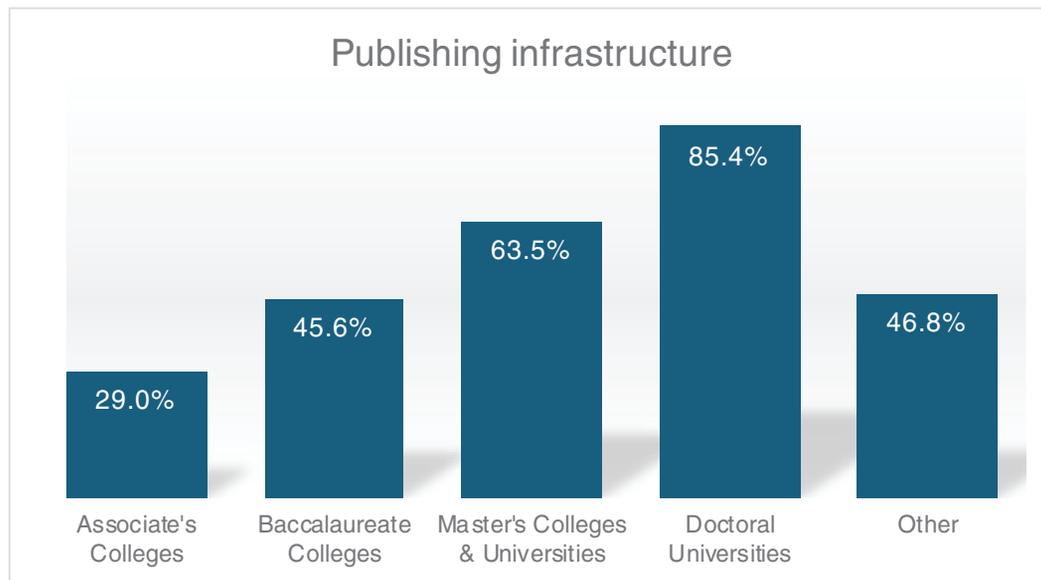


Figure 4. Proportion of academic libraries, by institution type, providing publishing infrastructure.

A more granular look at library-provided publishing infrastructure by institution type shows that the response option of library-managed/vendor-hosted institutional repository was selected most often by baccalaureate colleges at 20.6%, master's colleges and universities at 33.7%, and doctoral universities at 57.3%. The response consortium-provided/managed institutional repository (IR) was selected most often by associate's colleges at 15.3%, and the response Open Publishing platforms was selected most often by other institutions at 19.3%.

## Services or Programming Provided

Overall, 69.0% of academic libraries provided services and programs in support of Open Initiatives. Of the four options, guides had the highest rate of engagement for all institution types and doctoral universities engaged at the highest rate for all services or programs, as seen in Figure 5.

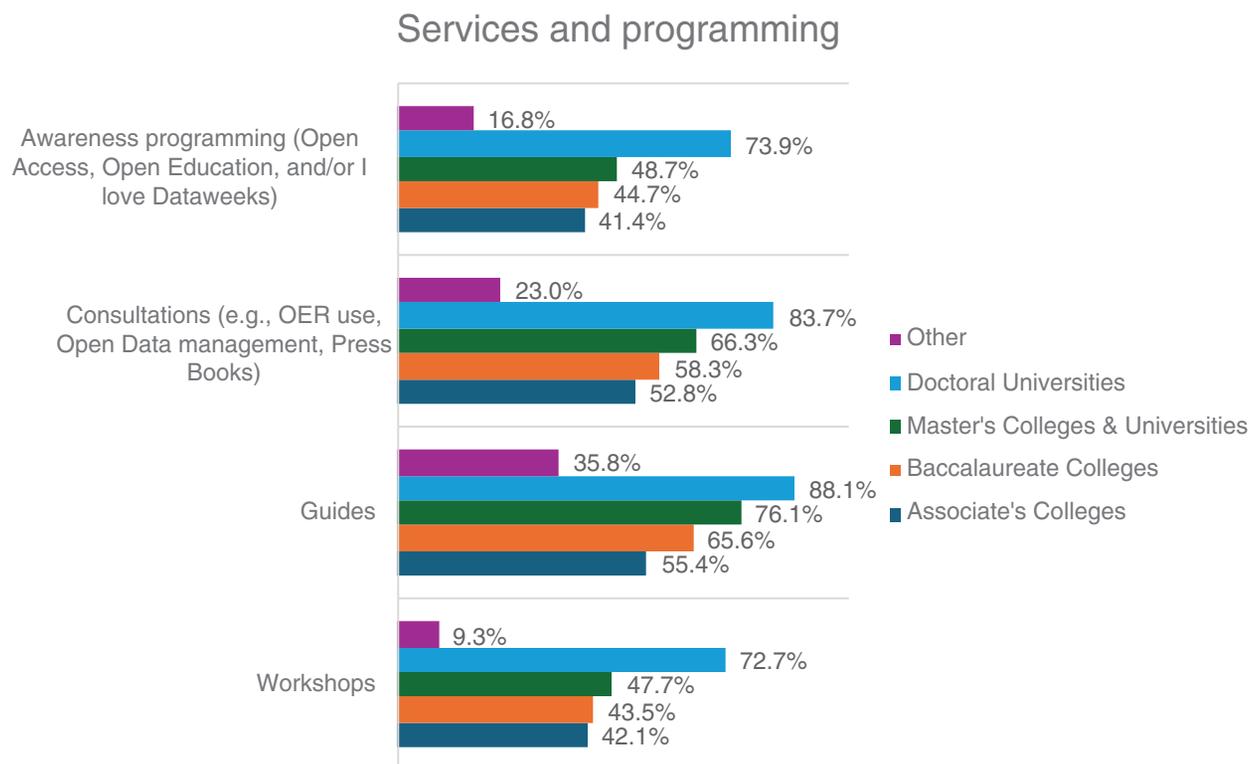


Figure 5. Services and programming offered, by institution type.

## Changes in Services/Activities, Staff, and Financial Support

When asked about what has changed in the past five years, most libraries had the same or more activity, staff, and financial support, as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Overall Rate of Change in Services, Staff, and Financial Support**

	Not Sure	Decreased	The Same/ Similar Amount	More
In the past five years, has your library increased or decreased the number of Open-related services/activities?	12.9%	3.4%	40.7%	43.0%
Is your library providing more or fewer staff support for Open activities than in 2019 (the latest survey on Open)?	16.2%	9.7%	52.5%	21.6%
Is your library providing more or less financial support for Open-related activities than in 2019?	16.6%	6.6%	56.6%	20.3%

When asked the reason for responses to the questions in Table 1, by far the strongest factor for academic libraries overall was changing institutional priorities at 51.8%, followed by reductions in staff at 37.6% and reductions in budget at 32.1%.

Taken as a whole, these trends about Open Initiatives reveal that the vast majority of academic libraries are engaged in supporting open, and they are most likely to support discovery by integrating Open Access or OER materials within the library catalog and facilitate

access to information by providing guides. It is not surprising that these are the most common activities and services given the mission of libraries. Slightly less than half of libraries provide publishing infrastructure or have external agreements supporting Open collections and subscriptions, which could be areas of growth for some institutions depending on their community members and context. The fact that most libraries have the same or more activity, staff, and financial support now than they did five years ago indicates a sustained or growing level of commitment to open-related activities.

## Data Collection at the Federal Level Ceases

In addition to the ACRL annual survey, the federal government had been collecting a smaller set of academic library data each year when institutions report through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS, a system of twelve interrelated survey components conducted annually). The 2024–25 cycle is the last year it will do so<sup>4</sup> after a long history of collecting academic library statistics beginning in 1966.<sup>5</sup> In 2024, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, one of four centers of the Institute for Education Sciences [IES] in the US Department of Education), which runs IPEDS, proposed eliminating the academic library component, which many library organizations and individuals opposed. Although the decision to cease federal data collection was not unexpected, it is particularly unfortunate in light of new research findings that IPEDS data have a significant role in state policy making and resource allocation by state higher education agencies.<sup>6</sup>

Although one possible outcome explored would have been for the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to collect these statistics,<sup>7</sup> as is the case for public libraries, the future of IMLS is in peril. Since taking office in early 2025, President Trump and his appointees attempted to close IMLS and the Department of Education through executive orders and enacted massive layoffs in spring 2025. The US Department of Education issued a request for information on redesigning IES in September 2025, which would seem to indicate interest in continuing data collection about educational institutions more broadly. Notably, the leading higher education association for institutional researchers submitted six recommendations.<sup>8</sup>

### Your Participation in ACRL Survey Is Vital

At the same time IPEDS is ceasing its academic library survey, campus decision makers increasingly require evidence-based arguments prior to allocating budgets. Therefore, it is vitally important for all academic libraries to participate in the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey.

- **Survey Open:** Through March 31, 2026
- **Submission Website:** <https://librarybenchmark.org/>
- **Reporting Period:** Fiscal year 2025, which is defined as the most recent twelve-month period that ends before October 1, 2025, corresponding to your institution's fiscal year.
- **Username:** Six-digit IPEDS ID (Locate your institution's IPEDS number at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/InstitutionByName.aspx>.)

## Conclusion

We in the academic library community have invested in creating our own data collection procedures and tools through our member-led association, ACRL. Now is the time for us to leverage that investment as we gather crucial evidence documenting our collections, programs, and services. All libraries should avail themselves of this valuable resource as we seek to both make improvements and demonstrate library impact and value. The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board encourages more academic librarians to join ACRL because membership dues underwrite the survey, the publication of *College & Research Libraries News*, and many other programs and services offered at no charge to the broader community. ACRL has made a personal difference in the careers of so many; please join or renew today and demonstrate through your financial support that you value our collective effort.<sup>9</sup>

The success of the annual survey, developed and administered by the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board,<sup>10</sup> depends on the expertise of ACRL staff partners whose work directly benefits all academic libraries and librarians, whether or not they are members of ACRL. We are especially grateful for the valuable contributions of ACRL staff colleagues Gena Parsons-Diamond and Sara Goek, who are continuing admirably in the face of ALA workforce reductions<sup>11</sup> that have placed an increased workload strain in divisions for remaining staff.<sup>12</sup>

As libraries face increased pressures to “prove our value” and “tell our story” to decision makers and given that federal data collection is ceasing, the field requires increased ALA support for robust data and research. We rely on coordinated national support so that we may engage in stronger advocacy in the field.

## Acknowledgments

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## Notes

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2. Association of College and Research Libraries, “The State of U.S. Academic Libraries: Findings from the ACRL 2024 Annual Survey,” 2025, <https://www.ala.org/acrl/benchmark-library-metrics-and-trends>.

3. Elizabeth Brown, Sara Goek, Kara Malenfant, and Gena Parsons-Diamond, “ACRL Presents – The State of U.S. Academic Libraries: Findings from the ACRL 2024 Annual Survey,” Association of College and Research Libraries, December 4, 2025, video 47:23, <https://youtu.be/MS3JW-XABII?si=IqW0tfYGdAoeafnb>.

4. IPEDS 2025–26 Survey Materials FAQ, <https://surveys.nces.ed.gov/ipeds/public/survey-materials/faq?faqid=1>.

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11. "American Library Association Implements Workforce Changes to Strengthen the Organization for the Future," American Library Association, October 21, 2025, <https://www.ala.org/news/2025/10/american-library-association-implements-workforce-changes-strengthen-organization>.
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