

Jane Jiang

# From Stacks to Support Hubs

## Rejuvenating Library Services for a New Era

In today's higher education landscape, the role of the library is being questioned more than ever. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT, though powerful, can generate unreliable or fabricated research information, leading students to bypass vetted academic sources. Many learners now prefer fast, simplified answers over deep inquiry—a “fast-food” style of studying that undermines critical thinking. In this shifting environment, it's easy to perceive the library as outdated or underused.

Yet the academic library remains a foundational pillar of higher education. It supports not just course completion but also the development of lifelong learning skills, critical thinking, and information literacy. Librarians have always been at the front lines of emerging technology—whether digital databases, learning management systems, or now AI tools—and we continue to lead in teaching students how to navigate and evaluate the digital information landscape with discernment and responsibility. Rejuvenating library services is not only possible, but it's also necessary for the health and future of our institutions.

### The Shifting Landscape of Information Access

Students today often begin their research not with librarians but with Google, YouTube, AI-driven tools, or Academic Learning Center tutoring services. Although these options offer speed and convenience, they rarely provide academic rigor, peer-reviewed reliability, or the context necessary for critical analysis. Worse, AI tools can produce hallucinated citations, outdated information, and false confidence in surface-level knowledge.

Meanwhile, the traditional role of the library is being disrupted physically and administratively. In some colleges, libraries are downsized or relocated to make space for AI hubs or tutoring centers. Library desks shrink. The symbolism is hard to ignore. Support services are rising in visibility, yet the library is expected to do more with less.

### Rejuvenation Through Relevance

Rejuvenating library services doesn't mean resisting innovation. It means reshaping our offerings to meet new needs with integrity. Today's students still need help identifying credible sources, understanding authorship, and navigating complex digital landscapes. Libraries must reposition themselves as partners in digital fluency and intellectual growth.

This rejuvenation includes the following:

- **Thoughtful AI integration**—led by the library: As AI tools rapidly enter classrooms and student workflows, it is essential that libraries take the lead in guiding their responsible

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Jane Jiang is director of libraries at UCNJ Union College of Union County, NJ, email: [yu.jiang@ucc.edu](mailto:yu.jiang@ucc.edu).

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use. AI literacy—like information literacy—belongs under the library’s charge. By offering workshops on citation verification, authorship questions, and bias awareness, libraries can help prevent misuse and foster a deeper understanding of AI’s capabilities and limits. Instruction should go beyond tool demonstrations to include critical thinking and academic integrity. Librarians have long been at the front lines of emerging technologies, from the early adoption of digital databases to instructional software and learning platforms. With their combined expertise in teaching, digital literacy, ethical technology use, and information evaluation, the library is not just a natural partner but also the *ideal leader* for campuswide AI literacy efforts.

- **Instructional collaboration:** Librarians can be embedded in courses, not just as guest presenters but also as true collaborators in the learning process. Teaching information literacy in the age of AI requires more than showing how to search databases; it involves guiding students to question, evaluate, and challenge what they find. By aligning our instruction with faculty learning outcomes and course assignments, librarians can help instructors integrate critical thinking, source evaluation, and ethical AI use directly into the curriculum. To ensure every student receives this foundational support, I strongly recommend that library instruction be required and explicitly included in all course syllabi.
- **Creative engagement:** Student programming can bring life and visibility back to the library. From chapter-a-day reading broadcasts and research bootcamps to creative expression events like blackout poetry or cultural and ESL Corner Days, libraries have the potential to be both academic and inclusive community spaces. These programs not only encourage engagement but also reflect and support the diverse backgrounds, languages, and identities of the student body.

## Holding onto Our Core Mission

Despite all the change, academic libraries’ mission not only endures—it grows more vital. As long as academic institutions exist, the library will remain a cornerstone of learning, discovery, and intellectual growth. We are stewards of inquiry, advocates for equity, and educators in a world that increasingly confuses convenience with credibility. Lifelong learning does not come from automation alone. It is nurtured through reflection, discernment, and curiosity—values that the library champions every day. In this new era, the library is not an outdated relic but rather a renewed force for academic integrity and informed citizenship.

By choosing rejuvenation over nostalgia, we reaffirm our place in the evolving college ecosystem. From stacks to support hubs, the library continues to transform—and in doing so, it remains essential. ʘ