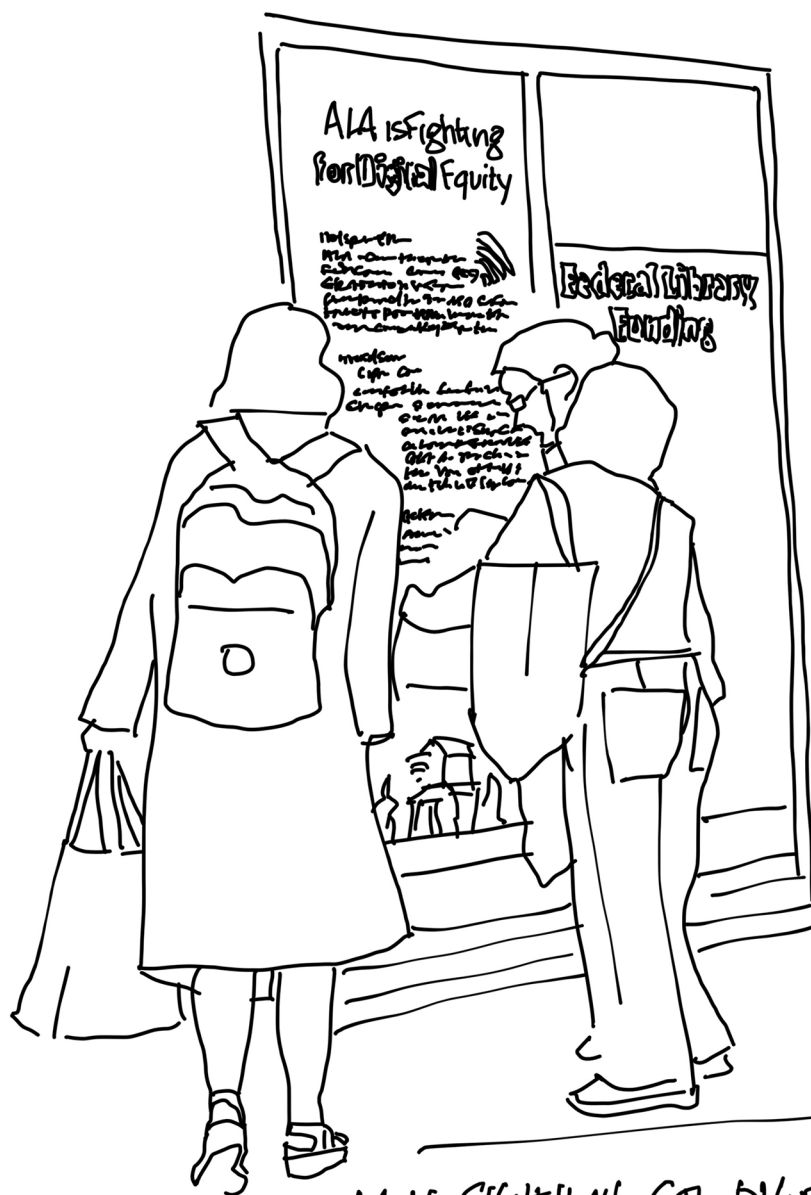


College & Research Libraries

news

Association of College & Research Libraries



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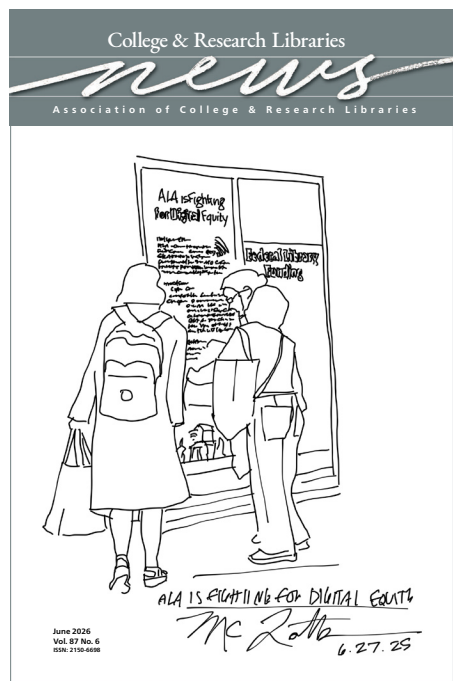
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This month's cover captures a lively moment from the 2025 ALA Annual Conference in Philadelphia, where attendees gathered to explore the ongoing fight for intellectual freedom and digital equality. The sketch, created by Megan Lotts, reflects her signature blend of creativity, play, and reflection. As art librarian at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Lotts is known for championing multimodal literacies through accessible, low-stakes creative practices like sketching, six-word stories, and collaborative artmaking. Her work encourages students, faculty, and staff to think critically, engage imaginatively, and discover new ways of learning through creativity and experimentation. Whether documenting conferences or leading workshops, her drawings invite communities to slow down, observe closely, and see libraries as spaces for curiosity, connection, and joyful inquiry together. The 2026 ALA Annual Conference will be held June 25-29 in Chicago.

Editor-in-chief: David Free

Recruitment ad sales manager: David M. Connolly

C&RL News Editorial Board: José A. Aguiñaga (Chair), Maya Riley Banks, Jennie M. Burroughs, Jessica Epstein, Kelly Karst, Natalie Eloisa Marquez, Kapil Vasudev, Michelle Demeter (C&RL Editor), Teresa Anderson (ACRL Executive Director), David Free (Editor-in-Chief), Anna Simonson (ACRL Publications Committee Chair), Leo S. Lo (ACRL Past-President)

Editorial offices: (312) 280-2513

Email: dfree@ala.org

Website: crln.acrl.org

Product advertising: Contact Melissa Carr, sales manager (US East, South, West, International), 704-491-7789, or Ryan King, sales manager (US Midwest: IL, IN, MI, WI), 773-414-9292.

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Florida Atlantic University Joins ASERL

Florida Atlantic University Libraries has joined the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) as of April 1, 2026, adding a new milestone in Florida Atlantic University's continued growth as an R1 research institution. The decision was approved by a vote of ASERL member libraries during the consortium's fall 2025 membership meeting. As an ASERL member, Florida Atlantic University Libraries will participate in a wide range of collaborative initiatives, including shared collections, professional development programs, and regional partnerships designed to expand access to resources and expertise across member institutions.

Founded in 1956, ASERL brings together leading research libraries across the Southeast to advance collaboration in resource sharing, professional development, and innovative library services. With the addition of Florida Atlantic University, the consortium will expand to forty member institutions working together to broaden access to knowledge and strengthen support for researchers, students, and their communities.

Community Leadership of RightsStatements.org Moves to Digital Scholar

Digital Scholar (DS) is pleased to announce that it has assumed community leadership and organizational stewardship of RightsStatements.org. The statements provide a set of standardized copyright terms for libraries, archives, and museums to inform online visitors how and if their digital cultural heritage works may be reused. As the organizational home for the initiative, DS will collaborate with the RightsStatements.org global user community to update and maintain these standards, ensuring responsiveness to evolving legal, technical, and operational contexts. DS will lead the development of a sustainable model to support the statements over the coming years. The statements are available in sixteen languages and implemented by major cultural institutions and aggregators worldwide, including Europeana, DPLA, and the Common European Data Space for Cultural Heritage, thus supporting international use and interoperability.

This transition follows the tireless work of the Steering Committee, which includes original developers of the Rights Statements vocabulary and its technical infrastructure. Committee members Greg Cram, Emily B. Gore, Melissa Levine, Maarten Zeinstra, Ariadna Matas, and Valentine Charles guided the project through a pivotal moment and worked collectively to identify a new organizational home. Their expertise and commitment have been instrumental in sustaining the project as it matures. Learn more about Digital Scholar at <http://digitalscholar.org/>.

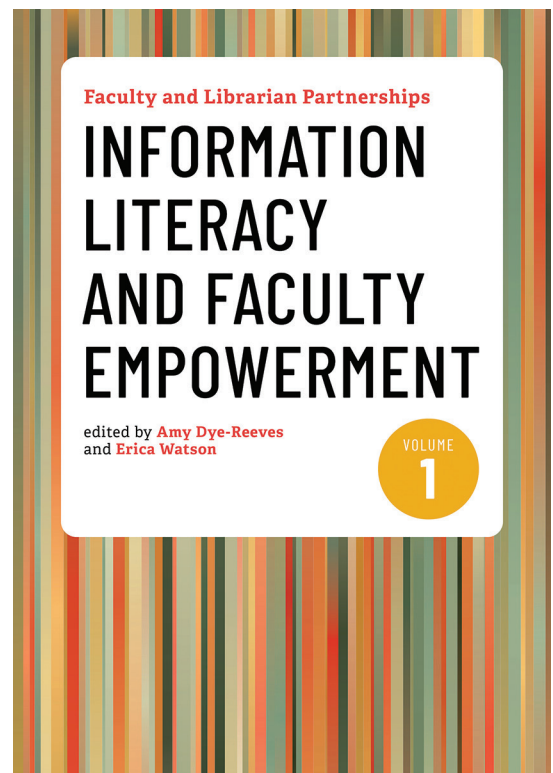
New from ACRL: Faculty and Librarian Partnerships Two-Volume Set

ACRL announces the publication of *Faculty and Librarian Partnerships, Volume 1: Information Literacy and Faculty Empowerment* and *Volume 2: Customized Program Support*, edited by Amy Dye-Reeves and Erica Watson. These books are packed with practical insights, real-world examples, and inspiration for the many types of faculty collaboration—from instruction to technology to outreach to collection development.

Faculty and Librarian Partnerships, Volume 1: Information Literacy and Faculty Empowerment contains ideas, lesson plans, and sample documents for collaborating with faculty on instruction and research. *Volume 2: Customized Program Support* provides information on discipline-specific projects, leveraging liaison roles, and maximizing the use of special collections. Both volumes contain detailed descriptions of different kinds of collaborations from all types of institutions: one-on-one partnerships, larger team efforts, on campus and with the wider community, virtual collaborations, and strategic organizational alliances.

Academic librarians and disciplinary faculty have many partnership opportunities that can contribute greatly to student learning and experience and the academic community as a whole. Planning and scoping these collaborations—and beginning them with a clear understanding of each other’s roles and responsibilities—can help make them as rewarding and beneficial as possible. Whether you’re teaching one-shots or courses, are part of the student success team, or are just navigating the complex world of faculty engagement, *Faculty and Librarian Partnerships* can provide easy-to-implement strategies, relatable stories, and innovative ideas to inspire and guide your work.

The *Faculty and Librarian Partnerships* Two-Volume Set is available for purchase, individually and as a set, in print through the ALA Online Store and Amazon.com; as an ebook through the ALA Online Store; via EBSCO, ProQuest, and other ebook vendors; and by telephone order at (866) 746-7252 in the United States or (770) 442-8633 for international customers.



Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database Indexes 150,000 Items

On November 1, 2025, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database (SFFRD) editorial team entered item number 150,000 into the database. That number is a milestone, something the original editor never anticipated when the first index card was typed up in the 1970s. Launched as an online, searchable database in 2000, SFFRD is available through Texas A&M’s Cushing Memorial Library & Archives. The database is an open-access project, open to any scholar with an Internet connection and a desire for critical science fiction citations.

SFFRD is designed to cover all aspects of science fiction, fantasy, horror, supernatural, and weird fiction. History, criticism, commentary, fan writings, and some reviews are all included, though book reviews are left to science fiction and fantasy book review index at this time. Materials are entered by author, title, and imprint, with subject headings added by the bibliographers, along with publication year, publication type, and language. Science fiction generates the largest number of entries, followed by fantasy and horror, in that order. Approximately 90% of the entries are in English. Learn more at <http://sffrd.library.tamu.edu>.

EBSCO Information Services to Release The New Yorker Magazine Archive

EBSCO Information Services (EBSCO) and *The New Yorker* recently announced an agreement to develop The New Yorker Magazine Archive, a digital collection providing full access to a century of award-winning journalism, commentary, fiction, poetry, criticism, and iconic cover art from one of the most influential magazines in American publishing. The New Yorker Magazine Archive offers scholars and students an unparalleled window into cultural and political history across the 20th and 21st century, featuring a complete 100-year run from Volume 1, Issue 1 in 1925 through February 2025. Researchers can explore in-depth reporting on pivotal historical moments, long-form profiles of global leaders and artists, and literary works that have defined generations. The publication's approach to fact checking and editorial review has made it a trusted resource for academic inquiry and critical analysis. Learn more at <https://about.ebsco.com/products/magazine-archives/new-yorker-magazine-archive>.

Clarivate Nexus to Launch in 2026

Clarivate has announced Clarivate Nexus, the first academic assistant designed to re-connect students and researchers with library content and services directly in the artificial intelligence (AI) tools they use. Its development represents the next step in the Clarivate Academic AI portfolio, extending Clarivate intelligence across the AI ecosystem. AI tools have become a common part of research and learning workflows, often in place of library or institutional systems. These environments offer speed and convenience but lack the depth, accuracy, and authoritative grounding of the trusted resources that libraries provide. As a result, users miss critical scholarly resources, valuable library collections go underused, and academic work is less firmly grounded in authoritative sources.

Clarivate Nexus is powered by a variety of indexes and content collections, including the Primo and Summon Central Discovery Index, Web of Science citation index, and ProQuest collections. It is developed as a flexible connecting layer that can be implemented across multiple environments. Learn more at <https://about.proquest.com/en/news/2026/clarivate-introduces-nexus-connecting-ai-users-to-trusted-academic-resources/>.

Tech Bits . . .

Brought to you by the ACRL ULS Technology in University Libraries Committee

Bitwarden is a password manager. Security experts recommend that we use strong, unique passwords for each account—however, the average person is unable to remember dozens of unique passwords. Password managers can recommend passwords when users sign up for a new service or change their password on an existing service. In addition to storing these passwords, password managers can autofill username and passwords in web browsers and on mobile devices.

Although these features are common to most password managers, Bitwarden offers a free version that will meet the needs of the average user. Bitwarden's code is also open source, which allows for independent audits of the software and for security experts to spot, report, and even propose fixes to security issues.

Laura Harris, SUNY Oswego

Bitwarden

<https://www.bitwarden.com>

2026 Top Trends in Academic Libraries

A Review of the Trends and Issues

This article explores the topics and issues that trended in academic libraries over the past two years. It draws on research and initiatives from librarians across the profession, highlighting the challenges libraries face. To focus on the most pressing current trends, topics that have been covered in previous Top Trends or Environmental Scans are specifically excluded unless new and significant developments warrant review; see the 2024 Top Trends and 2025 Environmental Scan for previous topics covered. For this year's report, we cover the new challenges academic libraries faced, including radical political and regulatory shifts in academic institutions, developments in artificial intelligence (AI) disrupting traditional research methods and tools, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II whole-scale redesign of websites, digital repositories, and future collection and intake processes. The report also highlights a bright spot: the Data Rescue Project, a grassroots volunteer community launched in 2025 by data librarians to recover and house at-risk public data from shuttered government websites.

Responding to Federal and State Legislative Actions

Academic libraries, and higher education broadly, continue to be significantly impacted and shaped by legislation and administrative action at both the federal and state levels in the United States. Among the sweeping changes¹ aimed at higher education by the Trump administration in early 2025 were significant cuts to grant programs underpinning funding for many US research institutions.

In March 2025, a series of executive orders paused many grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF),² National Institutes of Health (NIH),³ National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH),⁴ and Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), as well as enacted significant reductions in personnel at these agencies and others. Overall spending on scientific research, a substantial source of revenue for many institutions, reached the lowest level in more than a decade.⁵ The administration's proposed budget released in May and the eventual Budget Reconciliation Act called for further deep cuts to these agencies and others while specifically targeting programs like TRIO initiatives⁶ and eliminating new Graduate PLUS loans.⁷ Specific elite institutions were also targeted under the premise of cracking down on alleged antisemitism, with nearly \$6 billion in funding being threatened.⁸ Many of these institutions have since reached independent agreements with the Trump administration to restore their funding.⁹

Members of the ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee: Dr. Molly D. Boyd (chair) is a research librarian at the University of Arkansas, email: mdboyd@uark.edu. Dr. Laura Costello (vice chair) is director of access and information services at the University of Minnesota Libraries, email: cost0116@umn.edu. Jennie M. Burroughs is senior program advisor and researcher at the University of Minnesota Libraries, email: jburrough@umn.edu. Stephanie M. Cicero is director of library services at Roberts Wesleyan University, email: cicero_stephanie@roberts.edu. Justin Fuhr is science and engineering librarian at University of Manitoba, email: justin.fuhr@umanitoba.ca. Anita Riley Hall is assessment and analytics librarian at University of Louisville, email: anita.hall@louisville.edu. Anne Z. Krakow is library director at Saint Joseph's University, email: akrakow@sju.edu. Dr. Martha Kyriilidou is director and CEO of QualityMetrics LLC, email: martha@qualitymetricsllc.com. Tina Liu is cataloging librarian at McGill University, email: tina.liu@mcgill.ca. Eric Silberberg is librarian for instructional design and education at Queens College, email: eric.silberberg@qc.cuny.edu. Cecilia Smith is director of digital scholarship at University of Chicago, email: ceciliasmith@uchicago.edu. Minglu Wang is research data management librarian at York University, email: mingluwa@yorku.ca. Anna Yang is life sciences librarian at Santa Clara University, email: ayang3@scu.edu.

While many of the US government funding actions have been paused¹⁰ or ultimately reversed¹¹ following legal challenges, the shock and uncertainty ultimately led to layoffs at many institutions, including layoffs of library workers.¹² Library budgets across the higher education landscape are declining,¹³ and a worsening financial picture for institutions is likely to continue this trend.

Cuts to the Department of Education itself further impacted higher education programs, such as TRIO, and threatened particular impacts on Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs). Reinstated workers returned to work on December 15, 2025, facing a significant backlog.¹⁴ A wave of state-level legislation targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in higher education has also continued, with bills passed in Kentucky¹⁵ and Iowa¹⁶ and advancing in other states. Academic librarians in these states have seen impacts on their work as a result of these new laws¹⁷ and may struggle to follow professional best practices¹⁸ following their implementation.

Attempts to dismantle the Department of Education particularly impact data collection for institutions of higher education.¹⁹ Already in motion and of significant impact to academic libraries, the Academic Libraries section was officially retired from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) statistical survey following the 2024–25 year.²⁰ For smaller institutions and particularly those who are not ACRL or Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members, this dataset has served as a valuable resource for benchmarking as well as a tool for conducting research on library funding.

Budget Cuts, Closing Programs and Institutions

Since 2020, 75% of academic libraries have experienced a budget cut, with some facing cuts greater than 10%.²¹ Library funding had been in decline even before COVID-19, with library spending per student at four-year institutions having dropped by 20%.²² In the face of a potential demographic cliff, threatened tax hikes, and funding cuts to the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), library budget cuts are likely to continue and may lead to mergers, consolidations, or closures.

The decline in and precarity of federal funding, enrollment decline, and the potential for loss of income due to the higher endowment tax rate passed by Congress in 2025 contribute to schools shuttering programs, particularly in the humanities. In 2025, Boston University suspended doctoral admissions to the humanities and social sciences, West Virginia University eliminated twenty-eight undergraduate and graduate majors and programs, including all of the foreign language degree programs,²³ and the University of Chicago cut \$100 million in expenses by cutting staff positions and scaling back the number of doctoral students or pausing the graduate programs in general.²⁴ The threat of budget and program cuts force academic libraries to remove resources in those fields, risking gaps in collections and inconsistent access to the humanities and social sciences.

Institutions are identifying these threats and, as a result, are exploring mergers or consolidations. The number of schools participating in mergers and acquisitions tripled since 2016.²⁵ In extreme cases, some schools have been forced to close, leaving students, faculty, and collections in limbo.²⁶

As a result of these factors, libraries are now facing unprecedented challenges. Even if their institution is financially safe, library leadership may seriously consider the possibility

of their library merging in the next decade.²⁷ Libraries in shuttering institutions will have to consider the future of their collections, in particular those valuable items within special collections and archives. Library materials can be considered assets and subject to auction in bankruptcy proceedings, resulting in previously accessible rare materials to be sequestered in private collections.²⁸ For mergers and consolidations, libraries may have to renegotiate vendor licenses to cover multiple campus locations and increased student populations. Vendors may interpret the merger or consolidation as a loss of revenue, leading them to charge a one-time “expansion fee.”²⁹ Additionally, library leaders must walk a fine line by communicating changes to the campus community while avoiding disclosing information that could harm the legal aspects of the merger.³⁰

Structural Issues Facing Higher Education

Beyond the immediate budgetary and administrative challenges imposed on postsecondary institutions by recent political upheavals, higher education must also grapple with many simultaneous structural issues. Existing processes are increasingly unsustainable in light of recent political shifts, and the consequences of years of deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure and obsolete technologies, and the enrollment cliff are impacting academic libraries’ ability to carry out day-to-day services.

Discussions of the deferred maintenance of the aging buildings at Canadian and American campuses are regular fixtures of higher education reporting and continue to plague fiscal planning. The consequences of years of deferred maintenance have led some universities to suspend in-person classes.³¹ Even elite institutions are not immune. Maintenance costs for the University of California and the California State University systems combined are more than \$1.5 billion each year and continue to grow.³² Harvard University projected spending up to \$400 million annually to address deferred maintenance for the next fifteen years.³³ Some universities have alleviated the financial burden of deferred maintenance through government agreements.³⁴ However, reports of universities reallocating money from maintenance to fund core services indicates that deferred maintenance will remain a thorn in university budgets for the foreseeable future.³⁵ For libraries, this has greater implications as long-term preservation plans are subject to the regular and appropriate maintenance of spaces and equipment used for collection storage. Deferred maintenance is a problem that compounds with time, leading to larger and costlier repairs while negatively affecting the health and safety of current students and staff.³⁶

Another major structural issue affecting academic libraries is growing technical debt and technological obsolescence. The cost of constantly fixing aging or clunky software systems in the United States is more than \$1.52 trillion.³⁷ Academic library workflows are interrupted as many employers rely on collaborative software from Microsoft or Google, in addition to the complications that arise from having vital metadata stored on external cloud servers. Beyond straining regular workflows, certain library collections are particularly susceptible to technological obsolescence as the viability of, for example, video game or film collections are dependent on the accessibility and usability of consoles and operating systems that are no longer in the market. Furthermore, in the absence of physical media, maintaining digital access to streaming services already comes at an exorbitant cost.³⁸

The enrollment cliff also remains an issue for higher education as universities compete to enroll students from a decreasing applicant pool. Although some universities have continued

to see growth in their student bodies,³⁹ the projected decline in the number of high school graduates in some states is more than 30%.⁴⁰ These numbers have led to predictions of as many as eighty colleges closing between 2025 and 2029, doubling the average annual rate of closures.⁴¹ A secondary issue parallel to the enrollment cliff is a decline in students who pay full tuition without financial aid, further exacerbating budgetary shortfalls.⁴² This had led to the closure of satellite campuses, program cuts, and layoffs.⁴³ Some universities have responded by streamlining application processes and expanding offerings for nontraditional students.⁴⁴

Navigating AI Integration: Adoption, Ethics, and Critical Discourse

The adoption and use of AI in higher education and academic libraries is reshaping how educational institutions operate and engage with students.⁴⁵ This is evident in the increase of AI integration in research tools and library products, the development of AI literacy frameworks, and the push for professional development surrounding the ethical use of AI. Del Castillo and Kelly found that though many library professionals have engaged with AI tools such as ChatGPT for instructional purposes, it is more out of the need to keep current in the field.⁴⁶ A countermovement rejecting AI adoption and use has surfaced, opposing the pressure to be optimistic of AI, the opaqueness of AI integration in research tools, and the frequent outputs of misinformation.⁴⁷

Whether libraries are racing to adopt embedded AI tools or are forced to do so by publishers and vendors, AI-powered technologies are transforming how research is conducted and how academic integrity is maintained. Proponents of AI discuss its integration into Library Information Systems (LIS) as a means to improve access to library resources, while vendors such as Clarivate, Elsevier, and EBSCO tout embedded tools that feature natural language search, summarization, and metadata enhancement for users.⁴⁸ A deep dive into Primo Research Assistant found that natural language queries were somewhat effective though the overview summaries were less than ideal, attempting to summarize nonrelevant sources in a way to answer the query.⁴⁹ Although these interactive tools aim to improve automation and productivity overall, issues such as lack of transparency, bias, and inaccurate output still raise concerns. Extensive assessment of AI tools used in libraries needs to be undertaken, not just to reflect on the needs and values of the institution but also as a way to discuss the ethical outcomes of this use.⁵⁰

The discourse surrounding AI literacy in academic libraries often emphasizes the inevitability of generative AI adoption, positioning it as an essential skill for students and library workers. The integration of AI in library instruction ranges from using it to enhance student's ability to finding relevant literature to replacing human instruction with AI instruction.⁵¹ Although library instructors are leveraging AI in their classrooms, many agree that a huge chunk of time is built around ethical use. AI literacy frameworks developed by Barnard College, Stanford University, and the ACRL are just some examples of how AI is defined as potentially necessary and desirable, even while acknowledging unethical implications.⁵² At the same time, library instruction provides librarians with the opportunity to explore the unethical aspects of AI, such as authority, bias, and copyright with students in class.⁵³ Critical dialogue surrounding AI literacy narratives and AI tool integration is rapidly evolving.

Final Rule on ADA Title II

Libraries have long strived to make their web content accessible, with varying degrees of success. In 2026, the US Department of Justice's (DOJ) final rule, "Nondiscrimination

on the Basis of Disability; Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities” went into effect, bringing regulatory clarity to accessibility obligations of public academic libraries under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.⁵⁴

Although the DOJ has interpreted Title II to cover web content, the final rule establishes a mandatory standard for the first time: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA.⁵⁵ The most obvious place where the final rule will impact libraries is on their public-facing websites. This standard is overdue, as a recent analysis of one hundred university library websites found that 80% contained accessibility errors.⁵⁶

The final rule also extends accessibility requirements to digital content licensed from third parties. Vendors have responded: Springshare has updated LibApps products to meet the WCAG 2.1 standard and EBSCO has committed to meeting the standard for its ebook platform, but the responsibility also falls on content creators to ensure all material produced outside these templates is compliant.⁵⁷ Furthermore, inconsistencies remain. Hovious and Wang found that EBSCO and ProQuest reportedly deflect responsibility for accessible HTML and PDFs of academic articles on their databases, claiming accessibility of scholarly material is up to journal publishers, not the vendors.⁵⁸ Negotiating for accessible licensed content is a proactive, recommended approach by the ARL to help libraries meet legal obligations and ensure vendor accountability.

The ARL, which weighed in on the DOJ rulemaking, continues to advocate for born-accessible content, and this call was reportedly reflected in the final rule.⁵⁹ The final rule clearly applies to digital archival collections including born-digital, digitized collections, and institutional repositories (IRs). Given that most IRs depend on self-depositing, quality control to ensure compliance of all uploaded material is a challenge.⁶⁰

The final rule establishes exceptions, such as that of preexisting web archives and social media posts. Separately, compliance is not required if it causes a fundamental alteration to the service or imposes an undue financial and administrative burden. Ward speculates several possible ways these exceptions could play out.⁶¹ However, the ARL recommends that libraries consult with counsel and their information technology (IT) departments to understand their obligations.

Human Resources in Academic Libraries

The changing political climate has necessitated a change in recruitment practices at academic libraries and an increasing movement away from DEI initiatives at many academic institutions.⁶² However, even while many colleges and universities have scaled back or eliminated their DEI initiatives in alignment with the current political climate, Green found 61% of academic library candidates listed DEI initiatives of a prospective employer as very or critically important.⁶³ Similarly, the promotion of DEI practices was rated a 4.2 out of 5 in importance in Lowe et al.⁶⁴ Recruiting and hiring teams at academic libraries must bridge the gap between government and institutional policies and academic librarians’ desire for diversity, equity, and inclusion to recruit a wide candidate pool for open positions. Academic libraries who are unable or unwilling to continue to promote DEI initiatives may put themselves at a disadvantage in recruiting and hiring.⁶⁵

Job candidates rate salary, medical benefits, time off, and retirement options among the most important benefits associated with an academic library position.⁶⁶ Job location also has

a significant impact on job seekers, with many not looking to relocate outside of their current region for sociopolitical and personal reasons.⁶⁷ The increase in housing costs associated with higher interest rates, inflation, and a rising number of employees taking care of aging parents and family members make relocation difficult. Further, the sociopolitical climate of a location plays a factor as candidates may view a location's attractiveness based on the political attitude toward libraries in the location.⁶⁸ The steady increase in tenure erosion⁶⁹ and tenure firings⁷⁰ compound the higher education exodus.⁷¹

Despite rising challenges with job satisfaction, certain factors may make librarians less likely to change employers than in the recent past. Many of the same factors affecting new job candidates also come into play for retention of library faculty and staff, with salary and location among the most significant factors in retention.⁷² Many mid-career librarians discover that finding positions within their geographic location, and for wages that align with the required qualifications, is becoming more difficult, with many institutions not adjusting salaries along with inflation.⁷³ A limited job market in an academic library employee's current location, along with national and international competition from candidates for posted jobs may lead to "involuntary staying," where academic librarians remain employed in a role in which they are unhappy.⁷⁴ Work environment has a significant impact on academic library employees' job performance and satisfaction, with autonomy, clear duties and goals, development opportunities, and sense of purpose cited as important factors for job satisfaction.⁷⁵

Data Culture, Data Curation, Data Impact, and Data Rescue

Many academic libraries have developed research data services to meet researchers' needs over the past two decades. ACRL's new book, *Data Culture in Academic Libraries*,⁷⁶ projects this library service model will move further from traditional consultation and workshop training to data culture cultivation through partnership building, community engagement, and a rededication to DEI. Ithaka S+R's 2025 report,⁷⁷ *Researcher Challenges and Experiences with Data Services*, found researchers are often unaware of or have different understandings of library data services and thus underestimate their utility. Although uncertainty regarding data reuse permissions and deficiencies in sharing systems continue to be key obstacles to data intensive work, researchers have clear preferences for overcoming these barriers. They favor data services that are "1) individualized, localized, or bespoke; 2) contain a strong instructional component; and/or 3) have memorable branding."

Recognizing researchers' preference for local data support, the NIH Generalist Repository Ecosystem Initiative (GREI),⁷⁸ after several years of advocating for the established seven generalist data repositories,⁷⁹ recently established partnerships with US research universities and colleges.⁸⁰ Institutions favor generalist repository features, such as support for all file types, ORCID, DataCite metadata schema, DOI, and multiple license options, as well as practical considerations, such as being able to meet funders' requirements and community standards and sustainability. The most common service models for these generalist-institutional data repositories are self-deposit with limited library curation and metadata support.⁸¹

Led by the California Digital Library and ARL, the Machine Actionable Plans (MAP) pilot project concluded in 2025.⁸² The project developed ways to automate connections among multiple scholarly administrative and output processes while fostering relationships to support research data management. MAP has great potential to help institutions streamline their data

services and implement plans for integrating persistent identifiers, generative AI technologies, as well as other academic systems.⁸³ In recent comments to the US Office of Science and Technology Policy,⁸⁴ ARL recommended that federal agencies require machine actionable data-management plans (maDMPs) as a standard component of grant applications.⁸⁵

Academic libraries participated in the Implementing Data Evaluation in Academia Working Group initiated by Make Data Count (<https://makedatacount.org/>) and HELIOS Open (<https://www.heliosopen.org/>).⁸⁶ The working group developed a suite of maturity model, practical implementation guides, and case studies on data evaluation in academia.⁸⁷ Together with Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; <https://sfdora.org/>) and Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA; <https://www.coara.org/>) efforts, these tools enable institutions to make systematic changes to advance open scholarship practices, including research data. The need to measure the academic and social impacts of open access scholarship is being met by institutions such as the University of Texas Libraries,⁸⁸ which have begun to develop tools to automatically collect citation data from multiple open repositories and systems.

During 2025, federal government data was at risk due to radical decisions by the current administration. In response, data librarians initiated the Data Rescue Project,⁸⁹ providing a viable, sustainable infrastructure and specialized curation tools. The project also developed resources to guide nonprofessional volunteers through the rescue process. As the public witnessed the vulnerability of digital information and real-world examples of critical data loss, the data librarian community demonstrated the immense value of the stewardship skills they have espoused for decades, resulting in real social impact during this historic moment.

Environmental Sustainability in Academic Libraries

Post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to educate future stewards of our environment about the accelerating climate crisis. For academic library workers, this includes heightening awareness on climate change and resource depletion. Hamad et al. give evidence that academic library workers facilitate climate literacy and encourage library workers to use targeted outreach and embrace diversity to increase climate literacy.⁹⁰

In the past, environmental sustainability in academic libraries was seen in terms of “green,” energy-efficient buildings, waste reduction, and recycling.⁹¹ For today’s academic libraries, environmental sustainability also includes collection programs such as print-on-demand and collaborative collecting, reducing reliance on print collections, and providing access to digital resources through open access initiatives and digital programs.⁹² In addition, the ARL identified campus decarbonization as one way for academic libraries to reduce their climate change impact.⁹³

The United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) give an excellent blueprint for academic libraries to be more sustainable.⁹⁴ The SDGs have prompted numerous initiatives from the American Library Association (ALA), who formed a task force for achieving the United Nations 2030 SDGs and have included sustainability in their core values and conference planning.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, Tribelhorn says very few libraries take sustainability seriously, prompting a need for library leaders to set an environmental agenda and prioritize the climate crisis within academic libraries.⁹⁶ Indeed, library leaders must promote sustainable and green initiatives in their libraries⁹⁷ and “recommit to their values, promoting a culture of sustainability through continual assessment to benefit their communities in the long term.”⁹⁸

Initiatives such as the Sustainable Libraries Initiative⁹⁹ give hope that sustainability can be prioritized for all types of libraries and that library administrations incorporate the SDGs into library policies, as environmentally responsible academic libraries ensure they remain relevant institutions prepared for future environmental challenges.

Final Note

In response to external and internal pressures, the higher education ecosystem evolved rapidly in the past two years. These pressures, challenges, and evolutions are expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Academic librarians will, however, continue to use their expertise to help their students, faculties, and communities navigate the increasingly complex and clouded information world. Librarians will adapt and innovate and, all the while, continue to advocate for intellectual freedom and the sanctity of the human need to explore and to learn. //

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Rumadi, Ambar Yoganingrum, Abdurrahman Prasetyadi, Aria Bisri, and Stevry Yushady CH Bissa

From Research to Impact

Mapping BRIN Publications to SDGs Using Topic Modeling

Monitoring institutional research contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is becoming increasingly crucial for evidence-based decision-making in academic and research libraries. In the era of big data, libraries not only store publications but also support research analysis and visualization to develop institutional strategies. Researchers at the National Agency for Research and Innovation (BRIN)¹ in Indonesia have taken an innovative approach by using topic modeling methods, specifically Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), to develop an application that automatically classifies institutional publications into SDG categories.

The BRIN library can use this application to understand research trends, the interrelationships among topics, and research priorities that support the SDGs and to assist researchers, administrators, and policymakers within BRIN. Thus, the library not only provides access to publications but also provides information on the institution's contribution to sustainable development.

Traditional Challenges in SDG Monitoring

Before the use of machine learning-based methods, mapping publications to SDGs was generally done manually or based on simple keywords. Manual approaches are time consuming, error prone, and difficult to implement for large publication volumes. Keyword-based matching, while faster, often misses context and cross-topic themes, thus not fully reflecting research contributions to the SDGs.

This issue raises the need for more efficient, accurate, and traceable methods, for which topic modeling has emerged as an innovative solution.

The Role of the BRIN Library in the National Research Ecosystem

BRIN, as Indonesia's national research institution established in 2021 through the consolidation of several research institutions, has a mandate to promote basic and applied research, innovation, and collaboration with universities and industry. The BRIN Library plays a strategic role as a research information center, providing a publication repository, standardized metadata, and analytical services to support data-driven decision-making.²

With the increasing number of publications indexed by Scopus,³ libraries face new challenges: how to effectively manage, classify, and present research information to support SDG tracking and institutional strategic planning.

Rumadi is a research engineer at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), email: ruma003@brin.go.id. Ambar Yoganingrum is a research professor at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), email: amba002@brin.go.id. Abdurrahman Prasetyadi is a junior researcher at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), email: abdu059@brin.go.id. Aria Bisri is a research assistant at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), email: aria005@brin.go.id. Stevry Yushady CH Bissa is a research engineer at the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), email: stev001@brin.go.id.

Uncovering Publication Topics with Machine Learning

Topic modeling is a method that plays a crucial role in the development of this application. This unsupervised machine learning method is used to discover hidden thematic structures within a collection of text. Conceptually, this method can be likened to instructing a computer to read and process thousands of publication abstracts and then automatically group them into specific topics. Unlike traditional cataloging, the computer is not given a predetermined list of subject headings. Instead, the algorithm infers themes from patterns of words that frequently cooccur across documents.

The topic modeling method used in this study is LDA, a probabilistic topic modeling algorithm. The workflow for implementing LDA can be simplified into several key steps that are easy for information professionals to understand:

1. Data preparation (data curation)
The first step is to collect and clean text data. The study dataset consists of abstracts obtained from the Scopus database. This abstract data then undergoes preprocessing, such as removing punctuation, converting to lowercase, removing stop words (common words that lack thematic meaning, such as “a,” “the,” “is,” and “what”), and lemmatization (changing words to their base form, for example, “detection” and “detected” become “detect”). This step aligns with librarians’ core expertise in data curation and metadata management, ensuring that “garbage in, garbage out” is avoided.
2. Applying the topic modeling algorithm
Once the data is cleaned, the next step is to apply the LDA algorithm. This algorithm builds a probabilistic model that assumes each document is a mixture of topics, where each topic is a collection of multiple words.
3. Interpretation
The output of the LDA model is not a human-readable topic label but rather a set of “topics” consisting of words that appear together. This is where we use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to automatically label topics, ensuring each topic has a human-understandable label.

LDA is a widely used unsupervised machine learning technique for extracting topics from a collection of documents.⁴ With it, each document can be represented by a combination of multiple topics, enabling the analysis of cross-cutting themes that are not easily identified by traditional keyword methods.

In the context of this application, LDA enables:

1. Identifying key research themes and their distribution across the SDGs
2. Understanding the relationships among research topics that may be relevant to multiple SDGs
3. Providing interactive visualizations to facilitate publication browsing and decision-making

Case Study: Mapping BRIN Research to the SDGs

We attempted to connect BRIN publications to the SDGs framework using this application. The first stage used topic modeling to uncover hidden themes in the BRIN publication

corpus. The second stage mapped the discovered themes or topics to the seventeen established SDGs. This mapping process was automated by matching keywords across topics. The matching was performed based on a query set developed and used by Elsevier. The query set from the Elsevier 2025 SDG mapping dataset⁵ provides a comprehensive list of terms related to each goal.

The dataset includes abstracts of journal articles published by BRIN researchers and indexed in Scopus. The application performed the following steps:

- 1. Data preparation: Abstracts were cleaned of stop words, tokenized, and normalized.
- 2. Topic extraction: LDA generated several topics representing the dominant themes in the publications.
- 3. Mapping to SDGs: A combination of keyword-based matching and expert validation was used to link LDA topics to relevant SDG targets.
- 4. Visualization and reporting: Mapping results are presented through an interactive dashboard that allows for tracking of topics, documents, and research trends over time.

This analysis resulted in a precise mapping of BRIN’s research landscape on the SDGs. Figure 1 shows key findings, indicating an intense concentration of research on several SDGs. The three highest-ranking SDG groups are SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation, SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, and SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.

To visualize more complex relationships among topics, we use a knowledge graph, as shown in Figure 2. A knowledge graph represents information as a network of entities (called *nodes*)

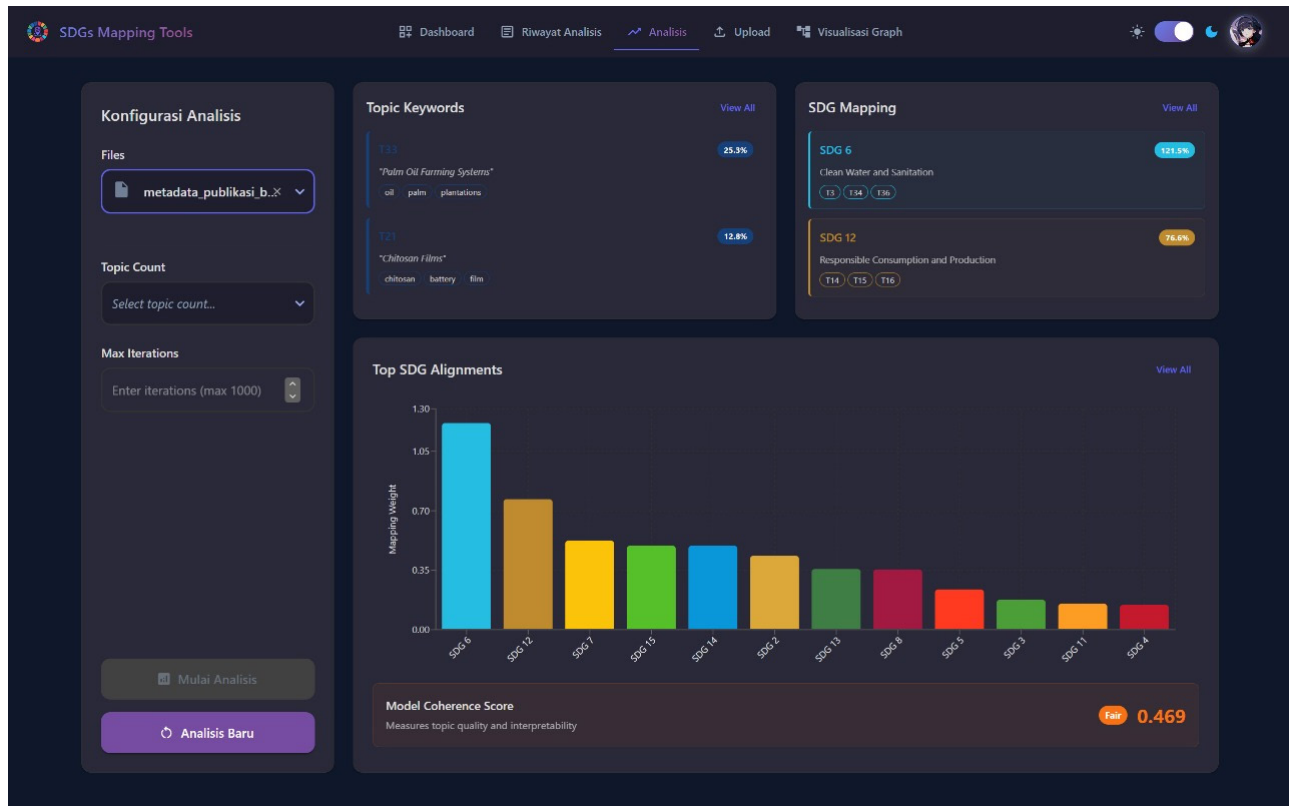


Figure 1. BRIN's research landscape on the Sustainable Development Goals.

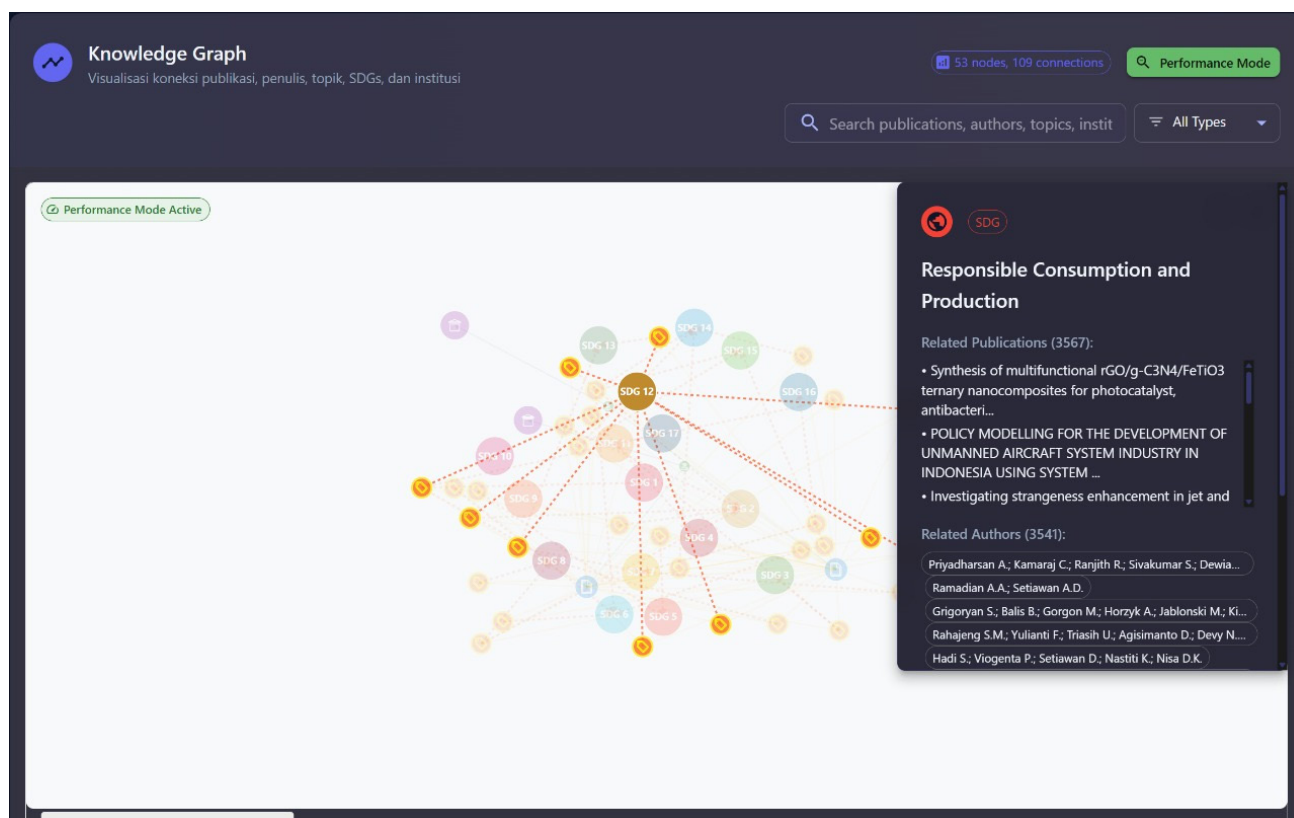


Figure 2. BRIN's research knowledge graph.

and the relationships between those entities (called *edges*). In this context, each identified topic, its key keywords, and each SDG can be a node. Edges then represent relationships, such as “has_topic” (publication-to-topic) or “contributed to” (topic-to-SDG). This interactive visualization allows analysts to explore, zoom in, and filter connections, revealing how different research areas are connected and where thematic gaps or overlaps lie. This approach transforms a static list of topics into a dynamic, explorable knowledge map.

This application can also analyze topics that fall under more than one SDG. Figure 3 shows that BRIN publications cover cross-SDG themes; for example, topic 3 (T3) is relevant to SDGs 6, 14, and 15. Such analysis is complex to perform manually.

Key Findings and Strategic Implications

The LDA analysis of BRIN publications yields several key findings:

- Evolution of research focus: Several research topics have seen significant year-over-year growth, reflecting the institution's strategic priorities.
- Linkages between topics: Topic visualizations clearly show connections among several SDGs, helping research managers understand cross-disciplinary contributions.
- Data-driven action: These results will support libraries in making recommendations for collection development, research progress reports, and institutional strategic planning.

In other words, topic modeling is not only a technical analysis tool but also a strategic information resource for librarians and research administrators. This study serves as a model, demonstrating how librarians, who previously played a traditional support role, can use this application to become strategic partners in their institution's research ecosystem. Libraries

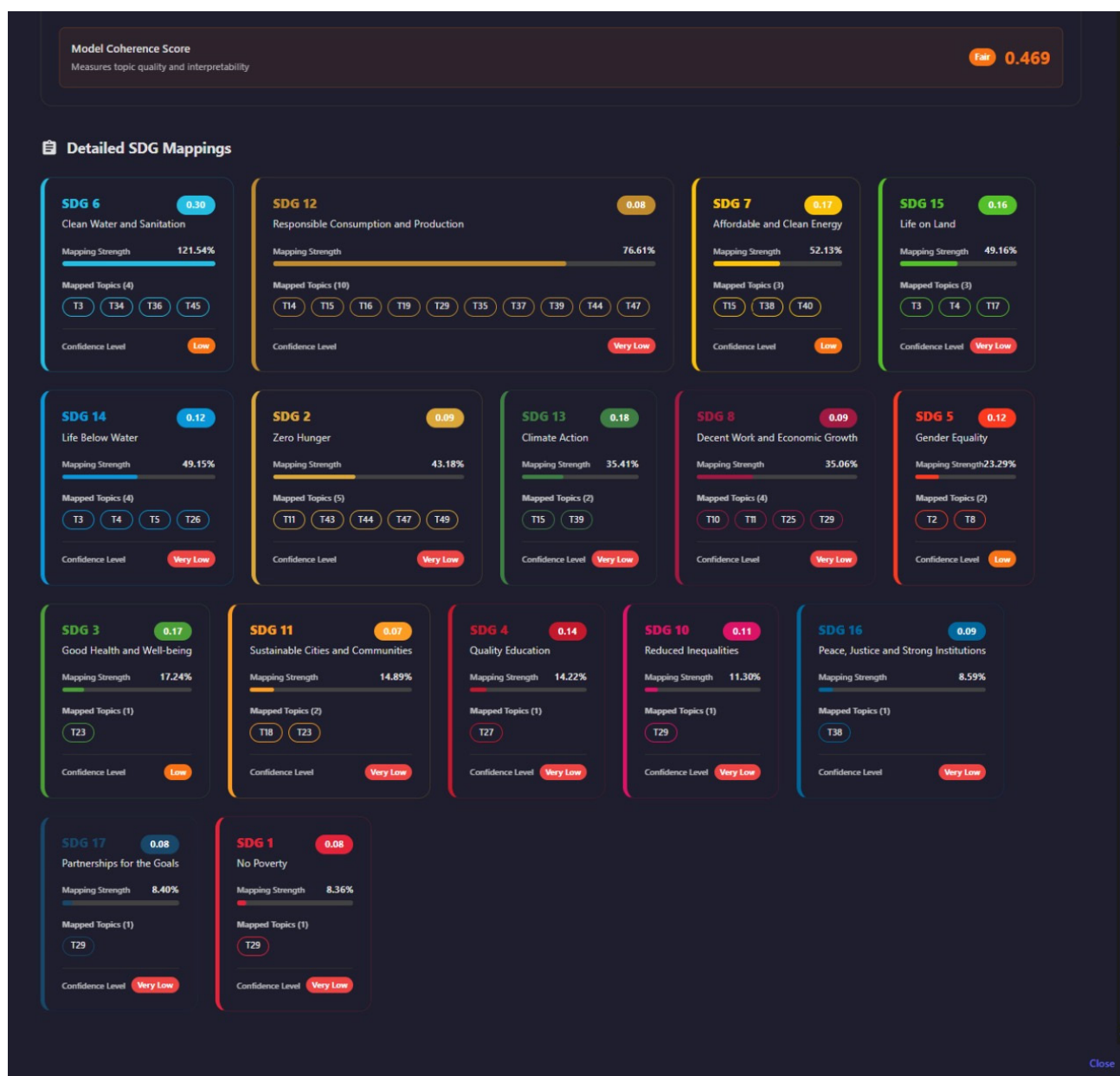


Figure 3. Detailed SDGs mapping.

are well positioned to lead in this academic field; they are neutral entities with deep expertise in scholarly data sources and metadata, and they can provide an institution-wide perspective that specific departments or faculty members lack. By adopting approaches such as topic modeling, libraries can offer research intelligence services that directly support the institution's strategic mission.

Here are some practical scenarios for how this application could be adopted by academic libraries:

- **Supporting institutional strategy:** This type of strategic planning often requires a clear understanding of an institution's research strengths and weaknesses. This is where libraries can play a role. Librarians can create SDG-based thematic maps of all scholarly publications using topic modeling. Institutional publication data can be obtained from institutional repositories or from publication sources such as Scopus and Web of Science.

- Enhancing research impact: Research impact services in many libraries still focus heavily on traditional citation metrics. Although important, these metrics reflect only a small portion of the actual impact. With SDG-based topic modeling, librarians can significantly expand their service offerings. Instead of simply providing h-indices to specific researchers or departments, librarians can offer in-depth thematic analyses of their institution's research output.

Conclusion

The use of LDA enables modern libraries to play an active role in supporting the Sustainable Development agenda through intelligent research information management. By combining topic modeling, interactive dashboards, and user-centered design principles, libraries can provide strategic insights to research managers, researchers, and policymakers.

This article emphasizes that libraries are not just repositories of information but also drivers of innovation in data analysis and research management. The application developed by BRIN researchers can serve as a model for other academic libraries seeking to transform data publication into tangible impacts aligned with the SDGs. //

Notes

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Envisioning AI's Role in Libraries

Perspectives on Innovation, Equity, and Responsibility Across Career Stages

This article grows out of a professional dialogue among three librarians working at different career stages: Ava Wallace, an early career archival intern and LIS student; Russell Michalak, a mid-career library director at a Hispanic-Serving Institution; and Trevor A. Dawes, an established university librarian and national leader. Their exchange reflects a shared commitment to examining both the opportunities and the challenges that artificial intelligence (AI) brings to libraries.

Rather than advancing a single argument, the contributors present their perspectives in conversation, showing how AI is reshaping discovery, access, and professional practice while also raising pressing ethical and equity concerns. The discussion is framed around three interlocking themes:

- **Innovation:** The technical pathways that AI opens for cataloging, metadata enrichment, and discovery
- **Equity:** The licensing strategies, policy frameworks, and collaborative infrastructures needed to ensure that access is just and inclusive
- **Responsibility:** The professional and ethical obligations to preserve human judgment, sustain workforce pathways, and prepare patrons to navigate AI critically

Ava underscores these stakes early by noting that AI can unlock powerful technical possibilities in archives and libraries. She points to “incredible search capabilities that can elucidate connections and locate hyper-specific data points,” enabling research that would have been impossible when records “didn’t exist in a viewable public form.” Seen alongside Trevor’s vision of making hidden collections visible and Russell’s emphasis on workforce preparation, her observation highlights how different career stages converge on the same recognition: AI’s potential to transform discovery is real, but its impacts depend on how librarians choose to shape and guide its use.

What Automation Promises—and What It Risks

Trevor sees AI’s most immediate promise in its ability to make hidden collections visible. “Much of our special collections, local history materials, and non-English resources remain underutilized due to poor indexing or the need for specialized knowledge to access them,” he notes. For him, tools that generate metadata, transcribe handwritten texts, and translate rare materials are not simply about efficiency but also about democratizing access. In his

Russell Michalak is director of the library and archives at Goldey-Beacom College and the co-founder of Inclusive Knowledge Solutions, email: michalr@gbc.edu. Trevor A. Dawes, a librarian, educator, and consultant, is the co-founder of Inclusive Knowledge Solutions, email: tadawes@udel.edu. Ava Wallace is an MLIS student at San José State University, email: ava.wallace@sjsu.edu.

vision, a family historian might discover letters long buried in unprocessed boxes, or a student might finally reach sources in a language they do not speak.

Ava, while sharing this sense of possibility, urges caution. She acknowledges the promise of AI for creating new opportunities for user engagement and improving library workflows but also warns of the risks that come with widespread automation. “In the worst case, increased automation depersonalizes library services, alienates users from developing relationships with their librarians and library staff, and current tensions around job security, privacy, and impacts on mental health will continue to escalate,” she reflects. For her, the future of the field rests on balancing technical opportunities with a human-centered approach.

Russell bridges these perspectives by situating automation within the context of student learning. He shares his experiences with JSTOR’s Seeklight, where generative AI helped students surface connections across disciplines and approach scholarship from new angles. He also describes student-led digital archiving projects, in which AI-driven metadata enrichment allowed students to curate institutional memory while gaining hands-on experience with emerging technologies. In Russell’s view, automation is valuable not just for accelerating workflows but for creating opportunities that prepare students for an AI-driven job market. At the same time, he stresses that these initiatives succeed only when supported by clear institutional policies—licensing agreements that ensure equitable access, training frameworks that build ethical awareness, and guidelines that protect privacy and transparency. For him, automation is not a stand-alone solution but rather part of a broader policy commitment to align technical innovation with educational equity.

Together, this exchange frames automation and discovery as both possibilities and dilemmas. Trevor highlights its capacity for access, Ava underscores its risks for alienating workers and patrons, and Russell demonstrates how it can be harnessed for workforce development. Their dialogue makes clear that the challenge is not whether to automate but how to do so in ways that preserve human connection and open pathways for future professionals. But ensuring that these technical gains are meaningful also depends on who gets access to the tools in the first place, which shifts the conversation toward equity and licensing.

Who Gets Access, and on What Terms?

Equity quickly surfaces as a shared concern. Ava begins by voicing skepticism about the way AI is often framed as a solution to structural problems. “Given that public services are in a constant state of funding crisis, I don’t blame people for seeking band-aids,” she explains, “but that is how we should discuss them—as emergency measures—while we advocate for the resources communities truly need.” At the same time, she admits that democratized access, even when imperfect, can prevent inequities from widening. The California State University (CSU) system’s decision to provide every student with a premium ChatGPT account, for instance, struck her as “dismaying” in principle but preferable to a future where only wealthier students could afford such tools.¹

Trevor picks up on this tension, shifting the conversation to the national stage. He argues that isolated fixes like CSU’s decision underscore the need for coordinated frameworks. “Leadership organizations need to move beyond issuing guidelines to creating practical, scalable frameworks that work for all types of institutions,” he insists. Cooperative purchasing agreements, shared infrastructure, and enforceable privacy standards could ensure that a rural public library has access to the same foundational AI tools as a well-funded research

university. For Trevor, equity cannot be left to chance or piecemeal solutions—it must be designed into the profession’s infrastructure.

Russell brings the discussion back to the local level, where these broader debates play out in daily decisions about licensing. At Goldey-Beacom College, a Hispanic-serving institution where many students are first generation and balancing work with school, he emphasizes that “equity is a lived necessity.” By securing campuswide licenses, he ensures that no student is excluded from AI literacy because of their ability—or inability—to pay. His approach mirrors Trevor’s call for scalable frameworks and resonates with Ava’s concerns about systemic inequities, but it also shows how immediate policy choices at the institutional level can make abstract commitments to equity tangible.

Together, their exchange illustrates that equitable access to AI requires action at multiple scales. Ava reminds us that stopgap measures cannot substitute for long-term investment, Trevor presses for systemic solutions, and Russell demonstrates how campus policies can embody these principles in practice. Yet equitable access alone is not enough—students and patrons must also know how to use AI responsibly, which brings the conversation to questions of literacy and human judgment.

Teaching AI—or Teaching Against It?

As the conversation shifts from access to literacy, Trevor raises a cautionary note. He argues that the real challenge of AI is not just its technical power but also its potential to blur the line between credible synthesis and superficial mimicry. “Librarians will need to become AI translators,” he suggests, guiding patrons through outputs that often appear authoritative but can be misleading. For him, literacy is less about learning to operate tools and more about modeling habits of inquiry: asking where information comes from, why it looks convincing, and what might be missing.

Ava agrees, but she presses for an even broader definition. “Literacy does not only mean how to use something; it also means how to think critically about it, how to assess its accuracy, and how to determine when it is or is not an appropriate tool to turn to.” She insists that AI literacy must be framed as discernment—an ability to resist the coercive normalization of AI in everyday life. “In terms of implementing AI in library settings, I see opportunity and risk as often two sides of the same coin—the capabilities enabled by AI are neither inherently progressive nor inherently harmful; what matters is how they are being utilized, for what purposes, and with what effects,” she says. “As library professionals, our role is to steer the ship—both within our own organizations and at the societal level—as thought leaders in navigating technological shifts, evolving knowledge communities, and changing social norms of information seeking and sharing.” Russell connects these ideas directly to student learning and workforce preparation. At Goldey-Beacom College, he incorporates AI into student employment and training through digital archiving projects. By teaching student workers to use AI tools for metadata enrichment and institutional memory, he prepares them not only to support library workflows but also to enter a job market where AI fluency is increasingly expected. Yet, echoing both Trevor and Ava, he stresses that technical proficiency alone is not enough. Ethical awareness and critical questioning must be built into the training. In his words, AI literacy is inseparable from preparing “informed, critically engaged citizens.”

Across their dialogue, a common theme emerges: Literacy must preserve human judgment rather than diminish it. Trevor emphasizes translation, Ava insists on discernment

and resisting AI hype, and Russell highlights education and empowerment. And because these challenges cannot be addressed in isolation, the next step is to consider how collaboration—within institutions, across generations, and across the profession—can sustain ethical and responsible practice.

Can We Navigate AI Alone? Why Collaboration Matters

When the conversation turns to collaboration, Trevor starts by widening the lens. For him, the question is how libraries can build structures that no single institution could achieve alone. He points to organizations like ARL and ACRL, arguing that their role must go beyond issuing statements of principle. “We need cooperative purchasing agreements, enforceable privacy standards, and shared AI models,” he explains. Without these collective frameworks, he worries that resource-rich universities will accelerate ahead while smaller institutions are left behind.

Ava responds by emphasizing that collaboration is not just structural but cultural. She cautions against allowing debates over AI adoption to fracture the profession, warning that “We need to stay grounded in what we do share, which is a commitment to the well-being of our LIS workers and library patrons. While we may not always agree, we cannot let divisions and disagreements about how to engage with AI foreclose critical conversations and collaboration.” She thinks librarians’ primary role is to bring our professional expertise in knowledge production, promoting literacy and navigating informational terrains to help users face the increasing implementation of AI from a place of understanding, empowerment, demystification, and awareness. For Ava, strong community engagement, intergenerational collaboration, and a willingness to experiment are all necessary so that AI is not treated as a mandate from above but rather as a collective process of negotiation and reflection.

Russell picks up on both threads and brings them into the day-to-day realities of library work. At Goldey-Beacom College, he has woven collaboration into student employment, where digital archiving projects become opportunities for mentorship. “When students learn to use AI tools responsibly, they’re not just supporting library workflows—they’re preparing for the broader workforce,” he explains. For him, collaboration is professional responsibility in action: aligning institutional goals with the growth of the next generation.

Together, their dialogue reveals that collaboration around AI must operate at multiple scales. Trevor highlights national leadership, Ava stresses community and solidarity, and Russell shows how collaboration is enacted through hands-on mentorship and training. Across these levels, the message is consistent: libraries cannot navigate AI in isolation. Shared responsibility—whether through policy, partnership, or pedagogy—will determine whether AI strengthens or undermines the values that define the profession. This sense of shared responsibility sets the stage for thinking about the future—how optimism and caution combine as librarians at different career stages imagine what AI will mean for the profession in the years ahead.

Shaping the Future: Values, Not Just Tools

What emerges from this dialogue is not agreement on every point but rather a shared conviction that AI in libraries must be guided by values rather than novelty. Trevor stresses the responsibility of national leadership to build scalable frameworks that prevent inequities from widening. Ava reminds us that innovation must be tempered by harm reduction,

ensuring that efficiency never eclipses justice, care, or entry points for new professionals. Russell demonstrates how these broader commitments can be enacted through institutional choices—licensing policies, workforce training, and projects that link discovery with student learning. Seen together, these perspectives suggest that AI’s impact on libraries will not be determined by the tools themselves but by the collective decisions librarians make across career stages and contexts. If guided by equity, collaboration, and critical judgment, AI can become a means of expanding access and preparing communities for the future; if not, it risks deepening divides. The challenge, then, is not simply to adopt AI but to shape it—intentionally, ethically, and in ways that preserve the human connections at the heart of librarianship. //

Note

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PEACEful Use of AI

A Tool for AI Education

The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) tools for research and writing has left librarians with a new challenge: how to teach ethical use of AI in a time of little to no regulation, pending court cases regarding copyright, and concerns over the level of environmental impact and potential stunting of critical-thinking skills. Students' views of and experiences with AI are mixed,¹ though their use of such tools is growing. Introducing a simple method for considering the issues that are inherent in AI use can help guide students (and faculty) through critical thinking that can deepen their understanding of AI and promote use that minimizes environmental, social, and intellectual harm. PEACEful Use of AI, or PEACE, offers a set of guiding questions, informed by values and ethics embedded within information literacy knowledge practices and dispositions, that encourages critical thinking before selecting or using an AI tool.

Acronyms as Teaching Tools

Acronyms provide a structure that can help the instructor and learner direct thinking around complex, layered concepts or processes. They offer a vehicle for teaching that can easily be adopted by other educators looking to produce similar learning outcomes. Librarians are likely familiar with Blakeslee's CRAAP acronym² to teach information literacy in the pre-framework days—either because they once taught with it or learned it as students themselves. Similarly, Caulfield's SIFT³ has been a staple in teaching lateral reading for evaluating information online. These acronyms are not enough in themselves, but they offer educators a structure that they can develop a lesson plan or learning object around. A search for “SIFT AND Caulfield” in the LibGuides Community returns thousands of results. A search for “CRAAP” returns more than 12,000 results. These tools have clear use in library instruction. PEACEful Use of AI (Figure 1) is a tool that specifically can guide instructors and learners through a critical assessment of the use of AI tools, specifically generative AI, in order to promote responsible use of AI and foster information literacy skills.

Development

This acronym emerged while I was developing a cocurricular workshop for students on the use of AI in a literature search. Before introducing AI tools and strategies for using them, I wanted to activate the learners' critical thinking concerning AI. In brainstorming and

Kimberly Shotick is an assistant professor and student success librarian at the University Libraries of Northern Illinois University, email: kshotick@niu.edu.

PEACEful Use of AI



Policies	Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies?
Ethics	Does it align with ethical standards and values?
Agency	Do you retain control over your data and its use?
Critical Thinking	Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning?
Environment	Do the benefits justify the environmental impact?

Figure 1. Slide showing the guiding question of the PEACEful Use of AI tool.

grouping the issues I was aware of regarding use of generative AI tools, the acronym surfaced: PEACEful Use of AI:

Policies: Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies?

Ethics: Does it align with ethical standards and values?

Agency: Do you retain control over your data and its use?

Critical Thinking: Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning?

Environment: Do the benefits justify the environmental impact?

PEACEful Use of AI: Promoting Information Literacy

The guiding questions of PEACEful Use of AI are complex; some do not have clear answers (*Policies*, *Environment*), others are subjective (*Ethics*, *Critical Thinking*), and others are difficult to establish (*Agency*). However, working through these questions introduces a critical pause before using a generative AI tool and can reinforce knowledge practices and dispositions central to the Information Literacy Framework for Higher Education.⁴

Policies: Does use of this tool comply with relevant laws and policies? When considering the use of AI, learners may ask about copyright and fair use in the training of generative AI models. However, many of these issues have had contradictory court rulings,⁵ and the US Copyright Office issued a prepublication that recognizes potential copyright claims in generative AI training but recommends the market play out for now.⁶

For this question, the frame Information Has Value is fundamental. A discussion about court cases, such as *The New York Times Co v. Microsoft Corp, et al.*⁷ helps learners explore the social construct of intellectual property and develop a disposition of respect for the work and ideas of others. It is also an opportunity to discuss concepts such as fair use and public domain and to introduce AI tools trained on open access or licensed content. For example, Adobe follows the European Union (EU) AI Pact,⁸ which promotes responsible development of AI, and has trained its image generation models on its own licensed content in addition to works in the public domain. A comparison of this training model with that of a company like OpenAI raises questions about ownership, respect, and agency.

In addition to considering the legal aspect, the *Policies* question provides an opportunity to encourage learners to consult local restrictions. For example, students can check their class

or college policies related to AI use; faculty and graduate students can consult the author guidelines for the top journals in their field.

Ethics: Does it align with ethical standards and values? Beyond the question of what is *permissible*, this question asks, “What is *right*?” Differences in individual values make this the most subjective question, but it is an essential one. To help learners identify their values as they pertain to the use of (or non-use) of AI tools, instructors can share value statements and ask to which degree individuals agree or disagree. In some cases, professional associations have released statements clarifying their values and ethical stances as they relate to AI, which can be another opportunity for discussion.

Agency: Do you retain control over your data and its use? This question introduces, or reinforces, the concept of privacy, a core value of librarianship, and is an opportunity to encourage learners to search for and read privacy policies. This is complicated, as many are hard to find and understand, but thanks to stricter EU laws around data protection,⁹ the information is usually available. Having learners explore cases of data breaches and misuse of private data can help make the issues around digital privacy concrete.

Critical Thinking: Does it support, rather than replace, your own thinking and learning? This consideration is an opportunity to discuss different approaches to using generative AI tools. Policies and ethics aside, the degree of critical thinking used depends on how the tool is used. For example, there is a significant difference between using AI to generate a paper and using it to generate examples to help the user understand a difficult concept. Reading about the emerging studies that demonstrate the potential harm of using generative AI critical thinking can also lead to important discussions about the purpose and value of education.¹⁰

Environment: Do the benefits justify the environmental impact? We may not truly know how one-time use of a generative AI tool affects the environment, but it is clear that the massive expansion of data centers to support these tools is having an alarmingly adverse impact on the environment and human health.¹¹ After exploring these effects, comparing use of AI to generate a meme for social media versus use of AI to detect potentially cancerous cells in a biopsy reveals an obvious discrepancy in the benefit versus drawback equation. Use in the first example has little to no benefit to the individual or society, whereas the second example is potentially lifesaving. Learners can place scenarios of specific AI uses on a continuum to demonstrate where benefits might outweigh harms and where specific uses cause more harm than good.

Application of the PEACEful Use of AI in Instruction

I first tested this set of guiding questions about AI use in a cocurricular workshop on using AI for literature searching. I began the workshop by first explaining how large language models (LLMs) work. I then asked the learners to identify potential ethical or legal issues related to LLMs. Once they shared their ideas, I built on their knowledge by revealing specific examples of these issues. For instance, participants were familiar with concerns over data centers. I cited a study that estimates that, in 2024, data centers consumed about the same amount of energy it takes to power the entire country of Thailand.¹² After providing several alarming examples of issues related to LLMs, I introduced the PEACEful Use of AI tool. Learners had varying degrees of receptiveness to and comprehension of the tool’s concepts, as their viewpoints regarding AI use and prior exposure to information literacy

concepts were diverse. Unsurprisingly, learners who were also educators themselves were the most receptive to the concepts, as it addresses a need for AI literacy and reflects professional values.

This acronym can be used in one-shot instruction, cocurricular workshops, tutorials, and credit-bearing courses. In the case of one-shot instruction, a session should be largely devoted to AI ethics, as these steps are complex and pull in a variety of other concepts that may need to be explored, depending on prior experience with information literacy concepts. In fact, there are so many related ideas, case studies, and potential applications that this tool could guide the curriculum of a semester-long credit-bearing course.

In an undergraduate cocurricular research program, I use the acronym as the basis for an activity that asks students to consider different scenarios of AI use in an academic setting (i.e., writing an abstract, discovering resources, and refining a research question). The students work through each letter of the acronym as it relates to the scenario. Finally, they come up with an alternative tool or way of using the AI tool that would more closely align with PEACEful Use of AI. As with the introductory workshop, the students' receptiveness and comprehension of the tool's concepts were mixed, highlighting the importance of scaffolding AI instruction with core information literacy concepts.

Although generative AI tools and the ethics around their use are evolving, PEACEful Use of AI is flexible, not prescriptive. Through guided questions, it aims to engage learners in a process of critical thinking instead of uncritical acceptance. The pace at which tech companies are developing generative AI tools and organizations are embracing them is overwhelming. My hope with PEACEful Use of AI is that librarians and other educators can use it as a starting point to help learners navigate and consider how AI fits into their own lives and to devise other variations and uses of the acronym as the AI landscape evolves—because we have to start somewhere.

Acknowledgment

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Chereeka Garner

Information as Currency

The Social and Cultural Value of Knowledge in the Algorithmic Age

In recent years, generative artificial intelligence (AI) content has been integrated into everyday life. Generative AI tools produce meal plans and shape travel itineraries, often without clear source acknowledgment or attribution. Rapid expansion of generative AI warrants renewed attention and focus on the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education's Information Has Value frame. Novice learners have difficulty understanding the value of information when free information is abundant.¹ Generative AI further complicates this and issues of authorship, equity, and trust. In the algorithmic age, information operates as economic, social, and cultural currency with its value being shaped equally by technologies, human intentions, and novice learners' assumptions about AI authority. Unlike value, which suggests a fixed worth, currency emphasizes circulation and exchange gaining worth through movement only within systems that authorize use, gatekeep access, and assign legitimacy. Framing information as currency provides an opportunity for examining generative AI's impact on these systems in relation to attribution, consent, cultural representation, and institutional authority, all of which must be addressed more directly within the Information Has Value frame.²

Reframing Information Has Value for the Algorithmic Era

The ACRL Framework includes Information Has Value as one of its six core frames, encouraging learners to recognize that information is shaped by core principles: intellectual property, ethics and ethical usage, proper attribution, and the labor of knowledge creation.³ These principles were developed in an ecosystem where creators can be identified, sources traced, and the genesis of ideas is straightforward. Generative AI disrupts this. Large language models (LLMs) use uncredited datasets obscuring origins and authorship. Content is attributed to human knowledge, uncredited data, and secret algorithmic processes with the role of each collaborator unknown. Shifts spurred by AI dictate a reevaluation of how information gains value and who has the authority to define value.

Willful and Forced Engagement with AI Tools

Students' reasons for using generative AI include AI's production speed, AI being integrated into software already being used, and student perceptions that everyone else is using it.⁴ Essentially, AI has become available and normalized within academic environments. A recent review of university policies on AI on fifty campuses in the United States found that, often, policy development is left up to individual professors. Allowing individuals to create policy is great for autonomy but unintentionally causes confusion for students with

Chereeka Garner is the digital learning and engagement librarian at the University of Central Florida, email: Chereeka.Garner@ucf.edu.

differing guidelines across classes, uncertainty for faculty seeking guidance, and difficulties for librarians working with both groups.⁵

Often, academic institutions promote AI readiness as a strategic priority, declaring adoption as essential for competitiveness and innovation. As a result, students may feel compelled to rely on tools they neither fully trust nor understand. For some, this pressure creates an uneven power dynamic with participation in AI-integrated systems becoming a requirement, not a choice. In these environments, meaningful consent becomes difficult to achieve, and users have limited control over how their data, writing, and behaviors are captured and analyzed. These pressures raise important questions about user autonomy within AI-rich learning environments. Coerced AI engagement forces students to transact in currency systems with rules of value and exchange that are not fully understood.

Cultural Erasure and Algorithmic Bias in AI Training Data

The rise of generative AI has intensified decades-old concerns about whose knowledge is preserved and amplified in information ecosystems. LLMs contain data scraped from the open Internet, reflecting biases and harm embedded in this landscape. The data and how they are used vary widely among tools, with stark differences between free and paid tools.⁶ Knowledge systems from underrepresented cultures and nondigital materials are excluded, presented without context, or misrepresented. Westernized English language content is the majority of what is freely available and becomes disproportionately represented. These imbalances result in tangible harmful consequences. When information functions as cultural currency, its circulation, control, and value are shaped by whose knowledge is within AI training systems.

AI-generated outputs are presented with an illusion of objectivity, but alternative viewpoints may not be included. Control over cultural exchange resides with AI developers and technology companies who determine what data is included, excluded, or weighted during training. These decisions are influenced by market incentives, data availability, and technical convenience rather than by ethical commitments to representation. Communities whose knowledge is absorbed into AI systems rarely maintain agency over how their information is represented, reused, or monetized. Conversely, some AI tools present dynamic viewpoints without being asked. This dynamic moves beyond unintentionally distorting cultures and risks perpetuating harm, when students rely on AI to learn about other communities. Communities underrepresented or misrepresented mimic broader systemic inequities.

These inequalities are intensified when algorithms assign legitimacy and visibility at scale, transforming cultural value into social and economic capital. Ultimately, librarians can teach how AI tools are created and which voices are amplified or diminished. Through the incorporation of critical information literacy, critiques of power systems in relation to information, and the Information has Value frame, students can be encouraged to think before they prompt.⁷

Information as Social Currency in the Algorithmic Age

When information functions as social currency, its value stems from visibility and credibility as assigned and reinforced by algorithms and design choices. In AI-mediated ecosystems, algorithms operate as arbiters of value, shaping what circulates widely, what is legitimized, and whose labor is uncredited. AI accelerates circulation by producing polished and seemingly

authoritative content on a large scale, enabling ideas to move quickly before being critically examined. For students who simply want to get an answer and move on, the speed and perceived confidence of AI responses often outweigh concerns about accuracy. As outputs are shared, paraphrased, and recombined, information gains social value through circulation, with AI-generated information being seen and echoed, rather than circulating ideas with traceable contributions or original insight.⁸ Recognizing information as adaptable currency heightens the stakes of the algorithmic age and framing highlights the urgent need for critical engagement with how information's value is constructed, bargained, and moves.

Attribution and Authorship in AI-Generated Content

AI tools disrupt a well-established set of guidelines regarding authorship. Traditional citation methods function to trace the origins of information. Using AI as an information source, however, complicates the ability to connect ideas to their authors. Free AI tools have challenges with citations not frequently experienced in subscription-based tools. With free tools, AI's output does not consistently direct the user back to identifiable sources with information often emerging from the unknown. Asking AI for the origins of its information may result in misleading citations, but the unreliability of these citations, and their associated information, may be unclear. AI tools with clear citation tracing methods often require a subscription or are embedded within high-cost databases, commodifying information and pricing out users.⁹

Without clear education on how AI tools operate, students may assume AI generations are original. When using AI for writing assignments, questions emerge. Can AI be cited as an author, and what risks are associated with the inability to critically analyze AI outputs? These issues lead to broader ethical conundrums relating to ownership and labor. If a student has used AI extensively throughout the writing process, are students the sole author? Should AI be listed as a contributor, and will students take the steps to list AI as a contributor? How can the voices of the unattributed original text be credited and/or compensated? AI assistance complicates our understanding of intellectual labor and associated costs.¹⁰ It is imperative that students rethink author responsibility in relation to AI. To guide students, information professionals must develop pedagogical practices that consider these issues. Using responsible AI disclosures and statements should be nonnegotiable. As revisions to the framework are considered, incorporating references to AI tools is necessary.

Teaching Strategies: Helping Students Navigate Information as Currency

AI content reshapes the economy by placing value on their product but not the individual creators. Source transparency regarding AI should be coupled with traditional teaching methods for source attribution, and readers should be informed when they are engaging with AI-generated or AI-assisted content. Citing AI and the differences between citing and disclosing should also be explicitly taught. Limitations of the information resulting from AI output should be shared and discussed so individuals can make informed decisions about usage. These dynamics reveal AI-mediated information systems as economies where participation is compulsory, valuation is uneven, and legitimacy is algorithmically assigned. Information circulates not only as knowledge but also as cultural, social, and economic currency. A currency framework shifts the instructional focus from information being used correctly

to discourse about how value, labor, and authority are created, exchanged, and unclear in AI systems. Helping students develop a critical and ethical relationship with generative AI requires instructional approaches that ground information's role as economic, social, and cultural currency. The following strategies offer a pedagogically grounded framework for supporting students as they navigate AI-mediated information environments.

Transparency and Disclosure

Educators can model responsible AI engagement by designing assignments that prompt students to clearly articulate their use of AI tools. Students should describe whether they used AI, how they used it, and why they selected that approach. This practice demystifies the role of AI in the writing process and reinforces the understanding that disclosure is part of ethical academic participation. Requiring students to disclose AI tool usage exposes hidden stages of information exchange, making circulation visible. Transparent reporting also supports conversations about authorship, intellectual labor, and the boundaries between assistance and creation. As educators, it is also important to practice our own teachings and be transparent about our own usage of AI tools.

Critical Evaluation Frameworks

Critical evaluation teaches students to identify and consider whether information is inflated, devalued, or unstable. Students benefit from structured processes that teach them to interrogate AI outputs rather than accept them at face value. This includes examining model limitations, using structured evaluation processes like lateral reading to analyze content against verified sources, identifying incomplete or biased responses, and asking whose voices may be missing from the dataset. Evaluation activities strengthen research skills and reinforce that AI tools reflect human choices, absences, and inequities.

Information Literacy Activities

Hands-on information literacy activities allow students to trace the transformation of information as it moves through AI systems. Integrating AI-focused activities into information literacy instruction helps students practice metacognitive awareness. Useful exercises include comparing AI-generated text to scholarly sources, analyzing available training data statements, and examining how generative tools paraphrase, compress, or distort work. These activities help students recognize the mechanics of AI transformation and implications for accuracy and integrity.

Ethical and Responsible Use

Ethical instruction requires students to question labor, ownership, and accountability within information exchanges. Educators should emphasize intellectual honesty, fairness, and attribution when discussing AI. This includes teaching when not to use AI. Reflective prompts can help students consider which values are upheld or violated through their AI use and how their decisions impact the broader knowledge ecosystem.

Conclusion

In AI-mediated systems, information functions as cultural, economic, and social currency, regulating circulation and assigning value across knowledge ecosystems, causing learners

to reevaluate how to navigate these environments. As the landscape evolves, students need guidance in evaluating AI-generated information, recognizing undisclosed labor, and understanding how information is valued and functions. Librarians and educators play a critical role in encouraging transparency, ethical engagement, and critical information literacies and in empowering students to make informed decisions before they prompt, create, and share. //

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Rose Beranis and Justine Cotton

Wellness and Intentionality

A Year of Exploring Why We Choose Librarianship

Academic Library Workers in Conversation is a *C&RL News* series focused on elevating the everyday conversations of library professionals. The wisdom of the watercooler has long been heralded, but this series hopes to go further by minimizing barriers to traditional publishing with an accessible format. In past issues, the topics were proposed by the authors. However, during 2026, this feature will focus on the authors' stories of librarianship. How they got here, why they stay, and even why they consider leaving or transitioning at times. During this time of great upheaval in higher education, exploring our many "whys" is a worthy venture. —*Dustin Fife, series editor*

Rose Beranis (RB): Justine, when I was first finding my way in academic librarianship, I spent a lot of time searching for examples of what wellness could look like in a library setting. At the time, I wasn't just looking for theory or frameworks, I was looking for people who were actually doing the work. I remember scrolling through posts, conference programs, and professional profiles trying to find even a few examples of librarians who were thinking about student wellness in practical ways. Somewhere in that search, I came across you.

We connected through social media, and what struck me immediately was that we seemed to be asking many of the same questions about librarianship: What does it mean to support students as whole people? Where does wellness fit into academic work? And how can libraries create environments where students (and library workers) can actually thrive? What made the connection even more interesting is that while we share similar interests now, we arrived here through very different paths. So I want to start our conversation with a foundational question. We both talk about wellness in libraries quite a bit, but the word itself can mean very different things depending on the context. How do you define wellness in the context of academic libraries, and how did that definition start to take shape in your own work?

Justine Cotton (JC): We did meet in such a serendipitous way (thank you, Instagram!), and I'm so grateful that we connected about wellness. Wellness has always been a big part of my life, from joining group fitness classes in high school to eventually becoming a fitness/yoga instructor in my twenties. While I didn't officially refer to wellness in my academic librarian role until a few years ago, my approach to librarian work (teaching, consultations) has always had an element of well-being behind it.

Rose Beranis is research and circulation services librarian at Trinity College, email: rose.beranis@trincoll.edu. Justine Cotton is teaching and learning librarian at Brock University, email: jcotton@brocku.ca.

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Your point about wellness meaning very different things rings true, and I believe that is often what complicates wellness initiatives in academic libraries. The term *wellness* can have a lot of baggage, so it's important to think about how we define it and the outcomes that we want to have when we build wellness into our library work.

I define wellness in academic libraries as providing students with the support to flourish—intellectually, emotionally, and physically. One of the quotes that I live by (and that hangs in my office) is from Carl W. Buehner and reads, “People may forget what you say. They may forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

In academic libraries, we have always worked to teach students to think critically, to explore the wealth of information that is available, and to ask questions. Wellness builds on this by offering students opportunities to connect with peers in a safe space, discover creative pursuits, and balance academic work with activities and tools to support their emotional and physical health.

Rose, I would love to hear how you define wellness. Could you also share some challenges and successes that you have had incorporating wellness in your library work?

RB: I really appreciate how you framed wellness as helping students flourish, and the idea that how students feel matters as much as what they learn really resonates with me. For me, wellness isn't just a program or an event; it's embedded in everything we do and touches multiple dimensions of life: emotional, social, intellectual, physical, occupational, environmental, financial, and spiritual. Wellness is about helping students find their own balance across these areas, recognizing that each person's path looks different. At the same time, it can be difficult to define and even harder to measure in academic libraries, which makes this work both challenging and necessary. The bigger challenge, I think, is not just integrating wellness into a single instruction session, event, or consultation but also helping it feel present, accessible, and part of daily life for everyone in the library.

Some of the work I've been part of reflects that in tangible ways. For several years, our library team created a *Color Our Collection* coloring book. Designed using materials from our collections and Trinity's archives, it gives students a way to pause, reset, and engage creatively. Programs like Snacks and Support bring together campus resources and, more importantly, foster connections between students and the supports they need. Even tools like an academic wellness tracker aren't about “fixing” anything but rather helping students see patterns in workload, stress, and confidence so they can make choices that support their own balance. Making wellness tangible and integrated across the library feels like the most meaningful work I can do.

Justine, I'd love to hear your approach. How do you keep wellness woven throughout your instruction, consultations, and library spaces so it feels authentic and continuous? And thinking more broadly about why we do this work, what keeps you invested in librarianship even during times of change or challenge?

JC: It really is meaningful work, and I love hearing your examples! Wellness programming can happen in so many different ways and involve many campus partners. I'm lucky to have colleagues who are also interested in wellness, and we have programs and collections supporting students in this way (e.g., board games to borrow).

We know that students are increasingly lonely and feeling disconnected. When I work with students in the classroom or one on one, I try to establish a connection from the very

beginning of the experience. It might be as simple as making eye contact and smiling with a student in a large class or sharing a funny story about my own morning. Having a teenage daughter has helped in making me more aware of the crazy trends on social media, which can be a fun way to approach information literacy.

As teaching librarians, I think we all have those days when the work we do can feel overwhelming and misunderstood within the university. Just as you mentioned, focusing on wellness and working to create opportunities to help students flourish has been the most meaningful work I have done as a librarian. Each term, I host a book club for students, and their positive feedback keeps me going on my most difficult days, and I'm still in touch with many of these students, even five years later!

On the topic of difficult days in librarianship, have you ever experienced burnout or observed it in your colleagues? How do you ensure your own wellness during stressful times?

RB: Justine, that question about burnout really hits. I think for a long time I didn't have the language for it, but I've started to recognize what it feels like in my own work. There is this sense of always moving at full speed, juggling shifting priorities, and not always taking the time to enjoy the work as it's happening. I recently heard someone describe it as living in a state of "joyless urgency,"¹ and that stuck with me. There's also this tendency I've noticed in myself to say *yes* often, wanting to be helpful and engaged, while also feeling a responsibility to carry things forward independently. Over time, I've realized that approach isn't always sustainable—and that it doesn't have to be.

What I'm starting to learn (still in progress) is that sustainability in this work has to be intentional. For me, that looks like asking for help and recognizing colleagues as a support system rather than something to measure myself against. It also means being more thoughtful about what I can take on and how I prioritize the things I've committed to. Finally, and maybe most importantly, it's about slowing down enough to actually notice the parts of the work that feel meaningful. Because despite the challenges, I do love this work. I love the people I work with, and I believe in the impact we can have, even in small ways. That's what keeps me here and what makes me want to keep figuring out how to do this work in a way that feels sustainable over time.

Justine, how has your experience with burnout shaped the way you see your future in librarianship?

JC: Rose, you have perfectly described how burnout feels for me with that quote about "joyless urgency." There is a delicate balance between feeling actively engaged with projects and completely worn down (and even resentful) from taking on too much. There isn't much joy in work when you feel your work isn't making a difference or when you feel taken advantage of.

Like you, I'm learning to be intentional about the sustainability of the ideas and projects I take on. Energy and time are not unlimited, and we haven't even touched on our busy lives outside of work. Fewer but more meaningful things is my personal goal for the next few years at work and in life.

To end on a happy note, I would love to share one of the most meaningful moments I've had as a librarian, and I'd love to hear yours too. There are times when my student book club feels like a ton of work for very little impact. Last year, two things happened to make

me commit even deeper to it. First, I had a student write that it was the “highlight of her month” in her feedback. Then I lost my dad suddenly in December and was touched to receive the kindest messages from some girls who had been in the book club more than four years before. It made me feel that, yes, this made a difference in their lives.

Rose, can you share one of the most meaningful moments you’ve had as a librarian?

RB: It’s true, we haven’t even touched on how our personal lives shape our work, just as students’ lives shape their academic experiences. We carry our families, our obligations, and the challenges life throws at us. Sometimes those challenges are deeply personal, as you shared about your father’s passing. In those moments, we have to decide to pick ourselves up and return to work. Not just because it’s expected but also because we care about ourselves and about the community we support.

The experiences that keep me coming back are the ones that remind me why this work matters. Watching students connect with resources, discover connections, and support one another (sometimes for the first time) is profound. Seeing faculty recognize the impact of library instruction or hearing from a student who leaves a consultation with renewed confidence and clarity about an assignment—these are the experiences that affirm our purpose. They may feel small in the moment, but they ripple outward, shaping learning, growth, and collaboration in ways we can’t always measure.

When the work is tough, these instances make this work meaningful. They remind me that showing up, thoughtfully and intentionally, is worth it. That’s why I stay in this field and why I continue to explore how we can sustain ourselves and our students in ways that are meaningful, human, and lasting. //

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Taylor Baugher and Emily Blumenthal

Beyond the Cardigan

Why Asking “What Do You Think a Librarian Does?” Transforms Instruction

At the start of a first-year instruction session at George Washington University (GW), Taylor Baugher introduced herself as a research services librarian and asked her class, somewhat on a whim, “What do you think a librarian does?” After a brief pause, a student timidly raised their hand and said, “You get the resources that we use.”

At its heart, yes, this is librarianship, or at least one form of it. This simple answer offered a perfect organic segue to discuss collection development and the immense cost of the resources their tuition was supporting, subsequently leading to a conversation about Information Has Value, a key frame from ACRL’s Framework for Information Literacy.¹ From there, Taylor could discuss the work of other library professionals, from disciplinary experts to data services librarians and software developers, naturally directing students to the support section of the library’s website for research consultations.

After this five-minute basic introduction, the class was markedly more engaged and the discussion more robust. Taylor had not only connected students to resources but also demystified and humanized the expert in front of the classroom.

Overcoming Library Stereotypes

After that initial success, Taylor tried the question again in a different class but this time was met with silence. Students did not know why this person was in front of them, and this led to confusion and disengagement. Taylor responded to the silence with humor, asking, “No one knows, right?” and this eased the tension in the room.

When Emily Blumenthal integrated this reflection into her classes, she also found that humor was key to breaking the silence, sometimes joking, “I’m already breaking stereotypes by not wearing a cardigan!” The answers to “What do you think a librarian does?” quickly followed, often reflecting ingrained assumptions: “Shelves books,” “checks out books,” or, in one enthusiastic response, “*I just learned that you actually go to school to be a librarian! Librarians have to learn this whole complicated system of numbers about books.*” This exchange echoes the wider issue of library anxiety, a long-documented feeling that undergraduate students have that is exacerbated when librarians use jargon or assume shared knowledge creates distance.

Library anxiety was first theorized in 1986 by Constance A. Mellon, who found that 75% to 85% of all students experienced fear or anxiety in reaction to their experiences with the library.² Mellon noted that students’ feelings of anxiety were often expressed in relation to the vastness of the library and a feeling of being lost within such a large space. Gelman Library,

Taylor Baugher is research services librarian for undergraduate research at George Washington University, email: taylor.baugher@gwu.edu. Emily Blumenthal is data services librarian at George Washington University, email: emily.blumenthal@gwu.edu.

where many first-year library instruction sessions occur for GW students, is a seven-floor behemoth of Brutalist architecture. Providing a friendly guide in the form of a librarian who can demystify the library space and systems helps relieve this feeling of library anxiety.

We've found that students don't always know why a librarian is in front of them. And if they don't know why we're there, or what we do, why would they listen? Whether in a data literacy workshop or a first-year writing session, students' mental models often remain fixed around circulation desks and stacks. When students see librarians only as caretakers of materials, not also as educators or collaborators, a barrier to learning is created before the session even begins. A basic question like "What do you think a librarian does?" helps set the stage by removing that initial layer of jargon and confusion from students' vocabulary.

Establishing Authority and Building Relationships

These moments of levity and honest admission open the door for real conversation. Our research librarians come from a variety of backgrounds—MLIS, research Ph.D., elementary education, programming, and more. The master's degree in librarianship prepares us for far more than shelving books: It teaches us to teach, support research, and help students navigate information and data across disciplines.

When students realize that librarians teach, collaborate on research, and even analyze data, their interest and curiosity deepen. What starts as a simple query becomes a powerful opportunity for connection. By starting with what they think they know, we create a space for curiosity, trust, and connection.

This technique powerfully supports the affective learning domain, fostering curiosity and openness, which are key precursors to research confidence and sustained engagement. When students recognize librarians as approachable experts, we hope they are more comfortable asking for help, scheduling consultations, and viewing the library as an integral part of their academic network.

Conclusion: A Shared Reimagining

This exercise has prompted wider conversations among colleagues about how we frame our expertise. Instructional designers have expressed interest in adapting the prompt, and our conversations about jargon have even led to suggestions like adding *librarian* to the campus's glossary of essential language for students who are learning to apply English in academic settings. It's become a touchstone for discussing visibility and how our teaching can reshape perceptions of librarianship itself.

At its core, this exercise is about meeting students where they are, not only in their information skills but also in their understanding of who we are and why we're there. The question "What do you think a librarian does?" may be simple, but it invites something powerful: a shared reimagining of what learning and librarianship look like in higher education. ♪

Notes

1. American Library Association, "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education," February 9, 2015, <https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework>.

2. Constance A. Mellon, "Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and Its Development," *College & Research Libraries* 47, no. 2 (1986): 160–65, doi:10.5860/crl_47_02_160.

And the Winners are . . .

The Official Results of the 2026 ACRL Election

Alexia Hudson-Ward, dean of the library and university librarian at Georgetown University, is the 89th president of ACRL.

“I am deeply honored to serve as president of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Being entrusted with this role by a community I so deeply respect is both humbling and profoundly meaningful. We find ourselves in a complicated and consequential moment for our libraries, our institutions, and the broader higher education landscape. The pace of change is unrelenting, the pressures are real, and the stakes (intellectual, financial, cultural, and civic) are high. And yet, it is precisely in times such as these that our shared purpose must be most clearly defined and most firmly held.

“ACRL will remain steadfast in its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. These are not peripheral values. They are foundational principles that shape the integrity, relevance, and future of our profession, and they must be advanced with intentionality, thoughtfulness, and appropriate resourcing. Our work must continue to reflect a deep and abiding commitment to access, representation, and justice in all that we do.

“I look forward to partnering closely with the ACRL Board, our dedicated staff, colleagues across ALA divisions, and organizations seeking meaningful collaboration with us. Together, we have an opportunity to deepen partnerships, strengthen our collective voice, and more clearly articulate our positionality on the issues that matter most to our communities and to the future of knowledge work.

“Equally important, I look forward to working alongside ACRL members to develop and advance strategies that support us both professionally and personally. The demands of this moment call for resilience, clarity, and care. As leaders, educators, and information professionals, we must be intentional about how we navigate change (individually and collectively) so that we can sustain both our impact and our well-being.

“I am grateful to be in this work with you. Together, we will continue to move ACRL forward with courage, clarity, and conviction.”

During her 23 years of ACRL membership, Hudson-Ward has held several positions on the ACRL Conference Committees, including chair of the ACRL 2025 Conference (2023–2025), co-chair of the ACRL 2023 Conference Keynotes Committee (2021–2023), and a member of the ACRL 2011 Conference Virtual Conference Committee (2009–2011).

Hudson-Ward has also served on the ACRL College Libraries Section as past chair (2020–2021), chair (2019–2020), and vice-chair (2018–2019). She was a member of the ACRL



Budget and Finance Committee (2016–2020), co-chair of the ACRL Instruction Section (IS) ALA Midwinter Conference IS Soiree (2007–2008), and a member of the ACRL Marketing to Academic and College Libraries Committee (2007–2010). Hudson-Ward also served as a member of the ACRL IS and the Women and Gender Studies Section (2007–2009), the ACRL IS Instruction for Diverse Populations Committee (2007–2009), and a member of the ACRL IS Advisory Committee (2007–2008).

Hudson-Ward's experience with ALA includes Life Membership in ALA and the Black Caucus of ALA. She has also served as a member of the ALA Executive Board (2012–2015) and divisional executive board liaison to ACRL, ALSC, and United for Libraries. She was also the ALA councilor representing the Pennsylvania State Chapter (2010–2015). Hudson-Ward was a member of the ALA Committee on Professional Ethics (2020–2021), a member of the ALA Steering Committee on Organizational Effectiveness (2018–2020), a member of the ALA Budget and Planning Assembly (2011–2015), a member of the ALA Training, Orientation, and Leadership Development Committee (2007–2011), a member-mentor for the ALA Emerging Leader Program (2008–2009), and a member of the ALA Recruitment Assembly (2007–2008). She is currently a member of the Library History Round Table (LHRT).

Hudson-Ward's activity with state, regional, and other national associations include serving as the Pennsylvania Library Association's ALA chapter councilor (2010–2015), a Board of Directors member (2010–2015), and chair of the Annual Conference Evaluation (2008–2010). Her service to the Pennsylvania African American Library Association includes terms as president (2007–2008), vice-president/president-elect (2006–2007), and immediate past-president (2008–2009).

Hudson-Ward's honors and awards include ALA Emerging Leader (2007), the Pennsylvania Library Association's New Librarian of the Year (2007), a Library Journal Mover and Shaker (2008), Penn State Great Valley School of Professional Studies Faculty Diversity Achievement Award (2008), and the University of Pittsburgh School of Computing and Information Outstanding Young Alumni Award (2013). She was a Penn State Big Ten Academic Alliance Academic Leadership Program Fellow (2013–2014) and a UCLA Library Senior Fellow 2024 cohort member.

Other notable accomplishments for Hudson-Ward include co-creating the successful MIT Libraries–ACRL Diversity Alliance Administrative Fellow program to prepare underrepresented talent for future academic library leadership. During her tenure as Oberlin College's first BIPOC Azariah Smith Root Director of Libraries, she spearheaded naming the main library after civil rights leader Mary Church Terrell and supported an educational partnership with the Smithsonian.

Hudson-Ward's board memberships, both past (LYRASIS and Center for Research Libraries) and current ("The Conversation U.S. Edition," and The Corning Museum of Glass [ex-officio]) support the global library community, scholars, writers, and artists across the disciplines through publishing, research, curatorial, and shared resourcing. As a faculty member of Harvard's Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians and a nonprofit volunteer, she has positively impacted nearly 1,000 leaders as a leadership development educator.

Additionally, Hudson-Ward conceptualized Choice Publishing's *Toward Inclusive Excellence* (an award-nominated multimedia blog that advances discourse regarding diversity, equity,

inclusion, accessibility, belonging, and social justice in higher education) along with Mark Cummings and Bill Mickey, serving as its inaugural editor-in-chief for three years.

Her publications include D. Fife and A. Hudson-Ward, “Professional Development,” in A.C. Powers, M. Garnar, and D. Fife (eds.), *A Starter’s Guide for Academic Library Leaders: Advice in Conversation* (Chicago, IL: ALA, 2019); A. Hudson-Ward, J. Widholm Rodrigues, and S. Walter (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and the Campus Community: Academic Libraries and Museums in Collaboration* (Chicago, IL: ACRL, 2022); and A. Hudson-Ward, “Open, Inclusive and Diverse,” in S. Hirsh (ed.), *Library 2035: Imagining the Next Generation of Libraries* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024).

Yasmeen Shorish, associate dean for research and scholarly communications at James Madison University, has been elected ACRL vice-resident/president-elect. Shorish will become resident-elect in July 2026 and assume the presidency in July 2027 for a one-year term.

“I am honored and humbled to be elected ACRL’s vice-president/president-elect. My sincere thanks to ACRL members for putting their trust in my ability to achieve the vision I described. I don’t take the weight of your expectations lightly! I look forward to working with the Board of Directors, members,

and potential members to help reinforce advocacy for our professional values and strengthen our community building. The path may be challenging and complex, but our profession is *about* helping people meet challenges and navigate complexity so they can access, critique, and make effective use of information.

“We won’t overcome all our challenges in a year or two, but I am confident that we can make sustainable progress in areas that matter to the profession and to members. For many of us, it can be difficult to feel that we have the power to change things for the better in today’s world. But I believe that our power in coalition, collective action, and community building can be tremendous and transformative – both for us as individuals and for the profession as a whole.

“In this upcoming year, I’m looking forward to learning more about what strategies are underway already and where we can extend or buttress those efforts from ACRL President Alexia Hudson-Ward and the Board. I’m excited to do this work together with all of you.”

During her 16 years of ACRL membership, Shorish has served as a director-at-large on the ACRL Board of Directors (2021–2025), chair of the ACRL Research and Scholarly Environment Committee (2018–2019) and vice-chair (2017–2018), and chair of the selection committee for the ACRL Research Data Management Road Show Curriculum Designers and the Road Show Presenters (2015–2017). She has also served as chair of the ACRL Digital Scholarship Section Nominating Committee (2017), a mentor for the ACRL Dr. E. J. Josey Spectrum Scholar (2016), and as a member of the ACRL Health Sciences Interest Group Information Literacy Task Force (2011). Shorish also held various positions within the ACRL Digital Curation Interest Group, including past convener (2014–2015), convener (2013–2014), vice-convener (2012–2013), and recorder (2011–2012).



Shorish's experience with ALA includes being a member of the ALA Spectrum Scholarship Jury (2017) and the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association. Her activity with state, regional, and other national associations include serving on the SPARC Board of Directors, (secretary, 2025), SPARC Steering Committee (member and interim chair, 2023–2025), Academic Data Science Alliance Leadership Summit, conference planning committee, (session chair, 2020), Digital Library Federation (DLF) Advisory Committee, (member, 2017–2021), Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Fellowship for Digital and Inclusive Excellence Advisory Group (member, 2017–2020). Shorish also served on the Data Curation Network (DCN) Advisory Panel, (2018–19), DLF Technologies of Surveillance Working Group, (co-founder and convener, 2017–2018), Research Data Access and Preservation (RDAP) Conference Committee (co-chair, 2017), and the SLA-DBIO Home Page Subcommittee of the Public Relations Committee (member, 2010–2011).

Shorish's honors and awards include the University of Illinois iSchool Alumni Association (ISAA) Leadership Award, (2022), the James Madison University Madison Scholar Award, (2020–2021), the University of Illinois, Health Sciences Information Management Award, (2011) and the Northeastern Illinois University, Award of Merit in Recognition of Outstanding Research, (2009). She was an ARL + DLF Forum Fellow for Underrepresented Groups (2015), ALA Emerging Leader (2013), ARL Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce Scholar (2010), and ALA Spectrum Scholar (2009). Shorish graduated from Northeastern Illinois University, Summa Cum Laude (2009).

Other notable accomplishments for Shorish include her proposed model for research data management professional development for liaison librarians, which was accepted by the ACRL Board of Directors in 2015. While on the ACRL Board of Directors, Shorish advocated for and helped codify the transition of the ACRL EDI committee to a goal area committee in 2022. As chair of the ACRL Research and Scholarly Communications Committee, Shorish participated in the production and promotion of a new scholarly communications research agenda, which was published in 2019. Additionally, she helped gather information and set a strategic vision for the proposed independence and eventual formation of RDAP as a professional association (2017–2018), co-created the Vancouver Statement on Collections as Data; one outcome of the Mellon-funded Collections as Data: Part to Whole grant in 2023, serves on the project team for “Responsible AI in Libraries and Archives,” an IMLS grant to support ethical decision-making for AI projects in libraries and archives (2022–2025), and received an IMLS National Forum grant to surface community needs around collective open-access collection development in 2019. Most recently, she was named Special Advisor to the Provost on AI at James Madison University.

Her publications include Mannheimer, S., Rossmann, D., Clark, J., Shorish, Y., Bond, N., Scates Kettler, H., Sheehy, B. and Young, S.W.H. “Introduction to the Responsible AI Special Issue.” *Journal of eScience Librarianship* 13(1): e860. <https://doi.org/10.7191/jeslib.860> (2024); “Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future.” Prepared by Nancy Maron and Rebecca Kennison with Paul Bracke, Nathan Hall, Isaac Gilman, Kara Malenfant, Charlotte Roh, and Yasmeen Shorish. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries. <https://doi.org/10.5860/acrl.1> (2019); Shorish, Y. Special Issue: The Role of Scholarly Communication in a Democratic Society. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*. 6(2), p.eP2257. <https://doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.2257> (2018).

ACRL Board of Directors

Vice-President/President-Elect: **Yasmeen Shorish** (1,073); Russell Michalak (489)

Director-at-Large (4-year term): **Eric Edwards** (1,389)

Director-at-Large (4-year term): **Jill Sodt** (1,409)

Anthropology and Sociology Section (ANSS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Jylisa Kenyon** (76)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Doss Hill** (77)

Arts Section

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Leah Sherman** (56); Courtney Stine (38)

College Libraries Section (CLS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Jason Keinsley** (377)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Sarah Sheehan** (239); Kristin Fowler (169)

Secretary (1-year term): **Krista Pegnetter** (389)

Community and Junior College Libraries Section (CJCLS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Laura Mondt** (133); Marc Meola (42)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **YiPing Wang** (136); Kris Goss (40)

Secretary (2-year term): **Christopher Bienvenu** (161)

Distance and Online Learning Section (DOLS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Chelsea Nesvig** (143); Mollie Peuler (110)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Christina Norton** (150); Anthony Joachim (93)

Secretary/Archivist: (2-year term): **Kelly Safin** (134); Lia Horton (111)

Digital Scholarship Section (DSS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Jennifer Hootman** (225)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Kaylee Alexander** (201); **Charlie Bennett** (158); Diana Castillo (88)

Secretary: (2-year term): **Maxwell Gray** (136); Whitney Russell (99)

Education and Behavioral Sciences Section (EBSS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Carin Graves** (152)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Dawn Cadogan** (135); Nicole Carpenter (22)

European Studies Section (ESS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Milan Pohontsch** (59)

Member-at-Large (1-year term): **Hélène Huet** (56)

Secretary (1-year term): **Marissa Bischoff** (30)*; Sarah Gilchrist (30) *elected by lot

Instruction Section (IS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Camille Abdeljawad** (435); Nicole LaMoreaux (172)

Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Danica E. White (564)**; **Kate Johnson (422)**;
Jennifer Beach (330); Jason Dupree (314)
Secretary (1-year term): **Megan Hodge (348)**; Kendra Macomber (247)

Literatures in English Section (LES)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Eric Jeitner (49)**; Jon Hesseldenz (28)
Member-at-Large (1-year term): **Teresa Gray (42)**; Jeanne Ewert (33)
Secretary (1-year term): **Laura Semrau (60)**; Whitney Bevill (15)

Politics, Policy & International Relations Section (PPIRS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Kimberly MacVaugh (90)**
Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Patricia Takacs (48)**; Rosalind Tedford (45)

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Audrey Pearson (172)**; Rebecca Bramlett (84)
Member-at-Large (3-year term): **Maggie Kopp (143)**; Kasia Leousis (105)

Science and Technology Section (STS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Chapel Cowden (142)**; Jeanne Hoover (71)
Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Andrea Pritt (151)**; Michelle Mussuto (60)
Publicity Officer (2-year term): **Laurie Neuerburg (171)**; Dan Broadbent (42)
EDI Officer (2-year term): **Gissel Rios (207)**

University Libraries Section (ULS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Kate Langan (383)**; Jane Hammons (381)
Member-at-Large (3-year term): **Olivia Chin (605)**; **Victoria Antwi (444)**;
Delores Carlito (402)

Women and Gender Studies Section (WGSS)

Vice-chair/Chair-elect (3-year term): **Janice Grover (120)**
Member-at-Large (2-year term): **Ashley McGuire (120)**
Secretary (1-year term): **Joshua Salmans (119)**

Elizabeth “Liz” Call, recently named head of Penn State University Libraries’ Eberly Family Special Collections Library, has also been named the Dorothy Foehr Huck Chair for Special Collections. The purpose of the chair is to enhance the university’s commitment to the commonwealth of Pennsylvania by providing a distinguished faculty member in the University Libraries the opportunity to continue and further scholarly excellence through contributions to instruction, research, and public service. The endowed chair supports the holder’s salary, research expenses, education and travel expenses, graduate and undergraduate student support, and support services for Special Collections. Call had served in her previous role as university archivist at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) since August 2019. The Eberly Family Special Collections Library advances scholarship, cultivates public engagement, and stewards Penn State’s historical record through more than 200,000 printed volumes, more than 25 million archival records and manuscripts, and another million photographs, maps, prints, and audio-visual items.



Brendan Johnson has accepted the position of head librarian at the Penn State Abington Campus Library. He has served in this role in an interim capacity since September 2025 and transitioned to this new role on March 1, 2026. Johnson joined the Penn State University Libraries in October 2019 as the outreach and engagement librarian at the Abington Campus Library. Prior to Penn State, Johnson was the Instruction and Engagement Librarian at St. Joseph’s University. In that role, he created and serves as advisor to the library’s student advisory board, the Library Lions. He has supervised several Bednar interns to assist with outreach and engagement initiatives at Abington. Johnson also has been a co-chair of the University Libraries Instruction Leadership Team since 2024.

Laurin Davis has been named arts and architecture librarian at the Penn State University Libraries.

Mary Diaz was recently appointed acquisitions assistant librarian at the University of Central Florida Libraries.

Cassandra Florian is now processing archivist at the Penn State University Libraries’ Eberly Family Special Collections Library.

Emily Zimmerman is now a reference and instruction librarian at the Penn State University Libraries’ Robert E. Eiche Library on the Altoona campus.

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