

Association of College & Research Libraries  
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## Project Title

Value of Academic Libraries Comprehensive Research Review and Report

## Overview

### Purpose of the RFP

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), is seeking proposals for the development and delivery of a comprehensive review of the quantitative and qualitative literature, methodologies, and best practices currently in place for demonstrating the value of academic libraries.

### About ACRL

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) is a division of the American Library Association, representing nearly 13,000 academic and research librarians and interested individuals. ACRL is the only individual membership organization in North America that develops programs, products, and services to meet the unique needs of academic and research librarians. Its initiatives enable the higher education community to understand the role that academic libraries play in the teaching, learning and research environments.

### Background

The relevance of libraries is under question. Search engines like Google “persuade untrained users that they can retrieve useful results by inputting natural language questions” into a highly simplified interface<sup>1</sup>. As a result, user expectations and the academic community’s perceptions are changing. Libraries have seemingly lost relevance in an age of instantaneous, relevant information retrieval. While any library staff member would agree this is not the case, it is now important for academic librarians to more effectively communicate their value.

The current economic climate has forced higher education administrators to make tough decisions regarding the funding of programs and units at their institutions. Academic departments have been consolidated, reduced, or dissolved as they struggle to adapt to tightening budgets. Now, more than ever, there is a need for libraries to demonstrate their value in clear, measurable ways to leaders in

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<sup>1</sup> See Bill Johncocks, "Web 2.0 and Users' Expectations of Indexes," *The Indexer* 26, no. 1 (2008).

higher education, information technology, funding agencies, and on campus - in order to secure adequate funding for their operations.

## Project Objectives

The primary objective of the comprehensive review is to provide ACRL leaders with a clearer view of what research already exists and where gaps occur so that ACRL understands what is known and not known about the performance of academic libraries. Additionally, this review may provide membership with tools and strategies to demonstrate the value of academic libraries to institutional leadership. In order to do this, the review should help answer this question:

How does the library advance the mission of the institution and contribute to student success?

This research must synthesize findings from existing research, including program evaluation studies, and identify key implications for academic libraries.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, this research must:

- review and outline literature related to the demonstration of the value of *all types* of libraries, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method studies;
- identify which existing methodologies are predominant and those that have not been used or are underused;
- identify best practices, as evidenced in the research base, for demonstrating the value of libraries;
- assess the applicability of existing methodologies to the academic library environment;
- and identify gaps in knowledge and information about this topic.

In order for this objective to be met, the research must:

- **Define value in terms of institutional, not library, goals.** The purpose of this research is to help academic libraries demonstrate their value to the institutions in which they are embedded. Libraries need to identify institutional goals (e.g., increasing student retention and graduation rates; increasing student achievement; increasing faculty research output) in order to communicate value in terms that institutional administrators will appreciate.
- **Identify measurable surrogates that demonstrate the library's impact on institutional goals.** Gate count, circulation statistics, and many other data libraries collect rarely help demonstrate the impact of the library on institutional goals. What are the appropriate, measurable surrogates for student learning? A review of existing data (for example, data available through the National Center for Education Statistics IPEDS site and Academic Libraries data collected by the NCES Library Statistics Program) for correlation between library variables and institutional measures may be useful in identifying these surrogates.

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<sup>2</sup> As one potential model, see "Scholarly Information Practices in the Online Environment: Themes from the Literature and Implications for Library Service Development" by Carole L. Palmer, Lauren C. Teffeau and Carrie M. Pirmann. <http://www.oclc.org/programs/news/2009-01-23.htm>

- **Provide best practices on measuring identified surrogates.** This report should highlight ways for all types of academic libraries (community college, college, and university) to collect data to measure surrogates that reflect impact on institutional goals. For example, the report should provide best methods to answer these questions, defining 'library' by its collections, physical spaces, and services:
  - Does the library's reputation influence enrollment? (more tuition)
  - How does the library factor into retention of students? (student achievement/student success)
  - How does the library increase the quality of students? (e.g., improve ratings in the National Survey of Student Engagement)
  - In what ways does the library influence student's attitudes about the community college, college, or university, and the overall quality of campus life? (future alumni as donors)
  - How does the library increase the amount of funding for research granted to the campus through its departments?
  - How does the library increase the output of the institution's researchers? (increased publications / patents and inventions)
- **Explain how the findings should inform data collection decisions of academic libraries going forward.**

## Target Audience

The audience for this report will be ACRL's membership, which includes all types of library staff in academic libraries and those interested in academic libraries, and in particular, library leaders whose responsibility it is to demonstrate value to institutional administration. These groups will use this report to inform their next steps in creating an assessment of their library's impact on institutional goals.

Findings of this report should be applicable to all kinds of academic libraries, but should draw upon literature, methodologies, and best practices across all types of libraries.

The timeline for work on this project is as follows:

RFP issued: September 17, 2009

Response to RFP due: November 2, 2009

Selection of provider: November 19, 2009

Contract Start date: December 1, 2009

Notification of all applicants: December 15, 2009

Report of Progress to ACRL: by phone or at the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston January 15-19, 2010

Interim report due to ACRL: March 5, 2010

Final report due: June 4, 2010

## **Deliverables**

A meeting with representatives of the ACRL Board either by phone or no later than at the Midwinter Meeting January 15-19, 2010, to review progress to date.

An interim report, considered draft until accepted by the ACRL Board, that addresses the objectives outlined above and includes a complete bibliography of all research consulted and cited to date, should be delivered to ACRL no later than March 5, 2010.

A final report, considered draft until accepted by the ACRL Board, that addresses the objectives outlined above, and includes a complete bibliography of all research consulted and cited to date, should be delivered to ACRL no later than June 4, 2010.

Report should include executive summary, review of research, analysis of research, recommendations, conclusion, bibliography, and other sections as appropriate to present the work.

The final edited report that incorporates any requested changes based on the ACRL Board's feedback will be delivered to ACRL no later than July 19, 2010.

The final report should follow the Chicago Manual of Style, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## **Response Specifications**

### **General Instructions**

The successful applicant will demonstrate strong research and writing skills. Applicant will have demonstrated experience, sensitivity and skills in developing resources related to the demonstration of value of academic libraries and assessment.

The response must comply with the content requirements detailed in this section. The applicant must submit a complete response that provides proof of experience and qualifications to complete the required activities and the estimated costs to do so. If the applicant is a doctoral student, he/she should send a letter of recommendation from a faculty member who agrees to supervise work on this project.

A complete response includes:

1. Letter of application
2. Formal response (including budget)
3. Attachments as appropriate (resume, etc.)

An electronic copy of the proposal (PDF preferred) is due by 4:30 p.m. (CST) on November 2, 2009. All costs for the applicant's response preparation are the responsibility of the applicant and may not be charged to the budget for the study.

### **1. Letter of Application**

- a) Provide a brief description of your (and, if applicable, your company's) experience doing research in the field of academic libraries and return on investment/value of academic libraries.
- b) What differentiates your service from that of other providers?
- c) Furnish ACRL with your/your company's service standards. Include your/your company's Service Level Contract(s) and Mission Statement.
- d) Describe any unique features that you/your company can offer that we should consider.
- e) The letter of application must be signed by one or more individuals qualified to perform the work described. Individuals signing the letter must indicate position title. A contact person for further information must be identified.

### **2. Formal Response**

The formal response must detail methodology, scope of work, implementation steps, and adherence to the schedule. The response must provide an overview of the approach to be taken in completing the tasks required and outline specific activities to be undertaken in order to produce the required final product(s).

Any anticipated theoretical or practical problems associated with the completion of each task must be discussed in the response, and solutions, alternatives, or contingency plans related to these problems must be recommended as appropriate.

#### **A. Staffing Section**

The staffing section must present a plan for the work that will ensure accomplishment of all needed tasks. Staff, including external consultants, assigned to the project must be identified by name, title, and the estimated amount of time devoted to each project task. Student staff must be identified by research position held.

#### **B. Budget**

The budget response must contain, at a minimum, the following information (in sufficient detail to show how cost is determined):

- Compensation, at a per day or other unit rate for personnel, and the number of hours projected for each individual to complete each task within the scheduled timeline.
- Computing/data tabulation/data gathering costs
- Contracted services

- Miscellaneous costs
- Total cost for project

NOTE: ACRL does not pay overhead or other indirect costs.

### 3. Attachments

- The response must include resumes of all project staff.
- Please provide complete information on three to five clients who are familiar with your qualifications and experience. Include the following information about each reference: Name, address, contact, telephone number, and description of work performed and tenure of service to client. Please include at least one reference from a not-for-profit organization.

### Other Considerations

#### 1. Selection Process

The contractor will be selected from those responses submitted to this RFP. The responses will be reviewed by a team of staff and member leaders of ACRL who will make a recommendation to the ACRL Executive Director. The ACRL Executive Director will make the selection.

#### 2. Contract for Services and Payment Schedule

ACRL will prepare a letter of agreement with the contractor that includes the specific responsibilities and timetable for the project. It will also clarify a schedule for payment that will be negotiated between the contractor and ACRL.

#### 3. Ownership of Materials

All materials developed, data collected, or reports prepared under the terms of this project agreement become the property of ACRL. ACRL reserves the non-exclusive rights to copy such material and to publish, disseminate, and otherwise use the materials developed under the terms of this agreement in print or electronically. The contractor may use summary findings for additional research, including articles and presentations, with prior permission of the ACRL.

### Submission

Please submit a PDF (preferred) or MS Word version of your response to the RFP **by November 2, 2009, to:**

Mary Ellen K. Davis  
Executive Director  
ACRL/ALA  
50 E. Huron St.  
Chicago, IL 60611  
[mdavis@ala.org](mailto:mdavis@ala.org)

A confirmation of receipt will be sent; if you do not receive this please call to ensure the proposal is not caught in a spam filter.

All proposals will be held in confidence.

Notification: All applicants will be notified of their status no later than December 15, 2009.

For questions contact:

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