

ACADEMIC LIBRARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENT SUCCESS: *Documented Practices from the Field*

Executive Summary

Academic librarians are increasingly participating in the national dialogue about higher education effectiveness and quality. They are contributing to higher education assessment work by creating approaches, strategies, and practices that document the value of academic libraries to advancing the goals and missions of their institutions. By demonstrating the variety of ways that libraries contribute to student learning and success, academic librarians are establishing connections between different aspects of the library (e.g., instruction, reference, space and facilities, and collections) and numerous academic success factors (e.g., student retention, persistence, GPA, engagement, graduation, and career preparedness).

Assessment in Action

Over 70 higher education institutions from across North America recently completed team-based assessment projects that resulted in promising and effective approaches to demonstrating the library's value to student learning and success. [Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success](#) (AiA) is a three-year project sponsored by the [Association of College and Research Libraries](#) (ACRL) in partnership with the Association of Institutional Research and the Association of Public Land-grant Universities, and with funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services. When the project concludes in 2016, over 200 higher education institutions will have participated in developing assessment methods and tools.

The methods and tools designed by the teams expand the resources that higher education institutions can share and use in their campus assessment initiatives. Many of the projects are replicable at other academic libraries or contain elements that can be adapted to a college or university's unique institutional context.

Findings about Library Contributions

The findings from the assessment work of the first-year campus teams are impressive. Although these findings are not necessarily generalizable to all higher education institutions, they do point to important relationships between the library and student learning and success. Higher education institutions are encouraged to advance and refine assessment work that focuses on the academic library's contributions to an institution's mission and academic priorities. A few examples of the project findings are highlighted below.

1. Library instruction builds students' confidence with the research process.
2. Library instruction contributes to retention and persistence, particularly for students in first-year experience courses and programs.
3. Students who receive library instruction as part of their courses achieve higher grades and demonstrate better information literacy competencies than students who do not receive course-related library instruction.
4. A library's research and study space fosters social and academic community among students.
5. Library instructional games engage students, enhance information literacy skills, and increase positive attitudes toward the library and its staff.

6. The library's use of social media promotes awareness of the library and builds academic community among students.
7. Multiple library instruction sessions or activities in connection with a course are more effective than one-shot instruction sessions.
8. Collaborative instructional activities and services between the library and other campus units (e.g., writing center, study skills and tutoring services) promote student learning and success.

Findings about Higher Education Assessment

The experiences of the AiA teams led to several recommendations for fostering evidence-based demonstrations of library value at higher education institutions. Six of the strategies are highlighted below. A more detailed discussion of the recommendations and strategies are available in the full report, *Academic Library Contributions to Student Success: Documented Practices from the Field*, available online at

http://www.ala.org/acrl/files/issues/value/contributions_report.pdf

1. Library assessment is most effective when it aligns with institutional priorities and mission.
2. Library assessment that includes the participation of representatives from other campus departments and units (e.g., faculty, institutional research, academic administration, student services) increases the quality of the assessment design and results.
3. Libraries can contribute important data about student learning and success to an institution's accreditation self-study and review.
4. A mixed-methods approach to library assessment strengthens and enriches findings about library impact.
5. Academic librarians recognize how assessment activities advance an institution's academic mission and are poised to lead library assessment initiatives.
6. Assessment achieves sustainability and meaningful integration with the library's services and programs when it is a designated responsibility of one or more librarians.

More Information

Read the full report, *Academic Library Contributions to Student Success: Documented Practices from the Field*, for ideas and strategies that promote evidence-based demonstrations of an academic library's contributions to student learning and success. Visit, adapt, and use the assessment methods and tools developed by the AiA campus teams that are available in a searchable online collection at <https://apply.ala.org/aia/>.

About ACRL

The Association of College & Research Libraries is the higher education association for librarians. Representing more than 11,000 academic and research librarians and interested individuals, ACRL (a division of the American Library Association) is the only individual membership organization in North America that develops programs, products, and services to help academic and research librarians learn, innovate, and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning and transforming scholarship.