DOCUMENTED LIBRARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS:
Building Evidence with Team-Based Assessment in Action Campus Projects

Executive Summary

Academic librarians from across North America continued to expand assessment practices through their participation in the Association of College and Research Libraries' (ACRL) three-year program, Assessment in Action: Academic Libraries and Student Success (AiA). Launched in 2013 by 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, AiA is helping over 200 postsecondary institutions of all types investigate the library's impact on student learning and academic success. By promoting library leadership in campus-wide assessment projects, libraries are demonstrating contributions to issues of institutional significance.

Although each campus team carries out an assessment project that is unique to the institution's academic mission and priorities, the findings about different ways that libraries are contributing to students' learning benefit the higher education community as a whole by expanding the body of evidence-based assessment results related to students' academic experiences. In addition, the numerous approaches, methods, and tools that the campus teams use to assess library impact can be replicated in or adapted to a variety of different institutional settings and customized to align with specific campus academic priorities.

Compelling Evidence for Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success

The AiA project findings add support to a growing body of evidence that demonstrates positive contributions of academic libraries to student learning and success in four key areas. The findings about library impact in each of the four areas described below, which come from assessment projects conducted at different types of institutions, are particularly strong because they consistently point to the library as a positive influencing factor on students' academic success.

A more detailed discussion of the findings is available in the full report, "Documented Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success: Building Evidence with Team-Based Assessment in Action Campus Projects," available online at http://www.ala.org/acrl/files/issues/value/contributions_y2.pdf

1. ***Students benefit from library instruction in their initial coursework.***
   Information literacy instruction provided to students during their initial coursework helps them acquire a common set of competencies for their undergraduate studies. The assessment findings from numerous AiA projects that focused on information literacy initiatives for freshmen and new students underscore that students receiving this instruction perform better in their courses than students who do not.

2. ***Library use increases student success.***
   Several AiA studies point to increased academic success when students use the library. The analysis of multiple data points (e.g., circulation, library instruction session attendance, online databases access, study room use, interlibrary loan) shows that students who use the library in some way achieve higher levels of academic success (e.g., GPA, course grades, retention) than students who did not use the library.

3. ***Collaborative academic programs and services involving the library enhance student learning.***
   Academic library partnerships with other campus units, such as the writing center, academic enrichment, and speech lab, yield positive benefits for students (e.g., higher grades, academic confidence, retention).

4. ***Information literacy instruction strengthens general education outcomes.***
   Several AiA projects document that libraries improve their institution's general education outcomes and demonstrate that information literacy contributes to inquiry-based and problem-solving learning, including critical thinking, ethical reasoning, global understanding, and civic engagement.

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Building Evidence for Library Contributions to Students' Academic Success

Additional areas of library impact are also being investigated by AiA campus teams. While these impact areas may not have been studied as extensively as the four areas described in the previous section or the project findings may not be as consistently strong, the assessment results do build evidence for positive connections between the library's services and resources and student learning and success as noted below:

- Student retention improves with library instructional services.
- Library research consultation services boost student learning.
- Library instruction adds value to a student's long-term academic experience.
- The library promotes academic rapport and student engagement.
- Use of library space relates positively to student learning and success.

Findings about Higher Education Assessment

A team-based approach to assessment on each campus is an essential element of the AiA program design. The project reports frequently mention the value of collaboration as the campus teams investigated connections between the library and student learning. Four benefits of collaborative assessment in particular have emerged:

- The collaborative work among the team members promotes a shared understanding of an institution's academic priorities and the contributions of various campus stakeholders to these priorities.
- Collaboration leads to important discussions about student learning and academic success, which result in a clearer articulation and increased agreement about the definition, description, and measurement of student learning and success attributes.
- By leading a campus team through an assessment project, the AiA librarians build collaborative and results-oriented leadership competencies that contribute directly to improving student learning and success at the institution.
- As campus team leaders, the AiA librarians advance the mission of the library in alignment with institutional priorities.

More Information

Read the full report, "Documented Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success: Building Evidence with Team-Based Assessment in Action Campus Projects," 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) 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.