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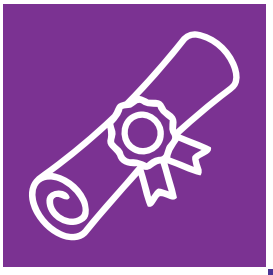

The State of U.S. Academic Libraries

FINDINGS FROM THE ACRL 2025 ANNUAL SURVEY

Acknowledgements

Writing and data visualization

Sara S. Goek (Project Manager, Data and Research, ACRL)

Data analysis

Karen Drill (Drill Consulting Group)

Additional input

Gena Parsons-Diamond (Program Manager, Data and Research, ACRL)

David Free (Senior Communications and Membership Strategist, ACRL)

Erika Johnson and Kara Malenfant (Members of the ACRL Academic Library Trends & Statistics Survey Editorial Board)

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2

About the Survey 3

Staff 4

Expenses 6

Collections and Circulation 7

Information Services 8

Conclusion 11

Notes 12

Tables 13

Appendix A: Methodology 19

Executive Summary

The annual Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey gathers critical information about academic library staff, expenditures, collections, circulation, and information services. The data help staff and administrators evaluate library performance over time and make peer comparisons. It can also help articulate the value of academic libraries and their impact on higher education, demonstrating the core services libraries provide, and the resources needed to support institutional missions.

This report focuses on U.S. academic libraries in fiscal year 2025 (the 2024–25 academic year). With the sunset of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Academic Libraries component after FY 2024, ACRL's annual survey is the only source of comprehensive, national data. The results are weighted and therefore representative of all U.S. academic libraries.

Key findings include:

Library Staff: The median total full-time equivalent (FTE) staff is 7.6, a slight decrease relative to 2024 even as the ratio of FTE students to staff has risen.

Expenditures: Median total annual library expenditures are $470 thousand, excluding fringe benefits. Libraries spend $523 per student FTE, the same as in 2024, suggesting that when adjusted for inflation, libraries have less spending power in real terms.

Collections and circulation: Academic libraries continue to focus on electronic resources, with 79.7% of total collection holdings and 98.2% of total circulation in digital format.

Visits: The number of people entering academic libraries annually increased by about ten percent in 2025 relative to 2024, reaching a median of 53,250.

Information Services: Library staff share expertise through interactions with users one-on-one and in groups. In 2025, academic libraries report a median of 838 for total reference transactions and consultations. Almost a third (29.3%) of these interactions occur virtually.

Academic libraries operate within a higher education environment facing demographic changes to enrollment and growing financial pressures.[1] Against this backdrop, the 2025 survey findings show that academic libraries face challenges securing the funding and staff levels needed to maintain core functions and adapt to change. Nonetheless, libraries continue to serve as vital hubs for their institutions, providing community learning spaces, access to resources, and expertise to help users navigate the rapidly changing information ecosystem.

About the Survey

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), conducts the annual Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey, which took its current form in 2015.[2] **The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board** develops the trends section each year and works to revise the survey instrument as needed to reduce respondent burden and meet the needs of the field. The 2025 survey covers fiscal year 2025, defined as the most recent twelve-month period that ends before October 1, 2025, corresponding to the institution's fiscal year. The data reported here thus reflects the 2024–2025 academic year.

The 2025 trends section focuses on Artificial Intelligence (A.I.). The results from the 2025 trends section are not included in this report; they will be the subject of a future article in *C&RL News*. See the **ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics LibGuide** for links to the 2025 survey instructions and worksheet.

Since 2021, ACRL has administered its annual surveys in-house via the Benchmark platform (**librarybenchmark.org**). The surveys are open to all U.S. academic institutions with libraries, as well as international institutions. In 2025, ACRL invited 3,575 institutions to participate and 1,480 completed the survey, a response rate of 41.4%. For U.S. institutions only (the focus of this report), 3,553 institutions were invited and 1,464 completed the survey, a response rate of 41.2%. The response rate is slightly higher than 2024, and about the same as earlier years.

The results in this report are weighted (unless otherwise noted) and therefore representative of all U.S. academic libraries. The use of nonprobability sample weighting accounts for differences between the responding institutions and the full population of U.S. institutions with academic libraries.[3] The weighted results presented here are not directly comparable to years prior to 2024, which were unweighted, and therefore skewed by the nature of the respondents. ACRL has undertaken this methodological change to ensure we can provide the field with representative data beyond the sunset of the IPEDS Academic Libraries component after FY 2024.[4] With the loss of that comprehensive federal effort, ACRL is working to ensure we can continue to provide high-quality data to support libraries' peer comparison, assessment, and advocacy needs. See **Appendix A** for further details of the survey methodology.

The charts and tables in this report show results for U.S. academic libraries overall and by institutional classification. The 2025 institutional classifications update and replace the framework historically known as the Basic Carnegie Classification. Each accredited, degree-granting U.S. institution is assigned to one of 31 classifications based on multiple dimensions including award level focus, academic program mix, and size.[5] For the purposes of this report, all responding institutions are grouped into one of five simplified categories: associate; baccalaureate; master's; doctorate; and special focus.[6] **Appendix A** contains further details on how the classification types are aggregated and their representation in the survey sample. Full data from the annual Trends and Statistics Surveys are available via ACRL's Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends tool (**librarybenchmark.org**). The interactive dashboards and reports allow users to conduct their own detailed analysis and custom peer comparisons. The following sections provide a summary of findings at the national level.

Dive into the survey results and peer comparisons with Benchmark!

The Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey is hosted in Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends. The tool supports data-driven planning and advocacy in academic libraries. All libraries have *free* access to Benchmark to complete surveys and view your institution's past survey data and key metrics.

A Benchmark subscription provides *upgraded* access to custom peer comparisons, interactive data dashboards, and 100+ unique visualizations. Discover insights about your library's performance, demonstrate value to stakeholders, and increase your impact at your institution with Benchmark.

Learn more at librarybenchmark.org. If you need assistance logging into your library's account, please contact acrlbenchmark@ala.org.

Staff

In 2025, U.S. academic libraries report median total full-time equivalent (FTE) staff of 7.6. That represents a slight decrease relative to 2024, which had a median of 8.0 (Table 1).[7] Between 2024 and 2025 median total FTE staff declined for baccalaureate and master's institutions, remained the same for associate and special focus institutions, and increased at doctorate institutions. The ratio of FTE students to staff rose slightly overall, from 204 in 2024 to 210 in 2025, an increase of 3.2% (Figure 1). While doctorate institutions have the largest staffs, they have among the lowest ratio of students to staff. Associate institutions on average have fewer total staff, but a much higher number of students per staff FTE. Between 2024 and 2025 they also saw the greatest increase in that ratio, a change of 11.7%.

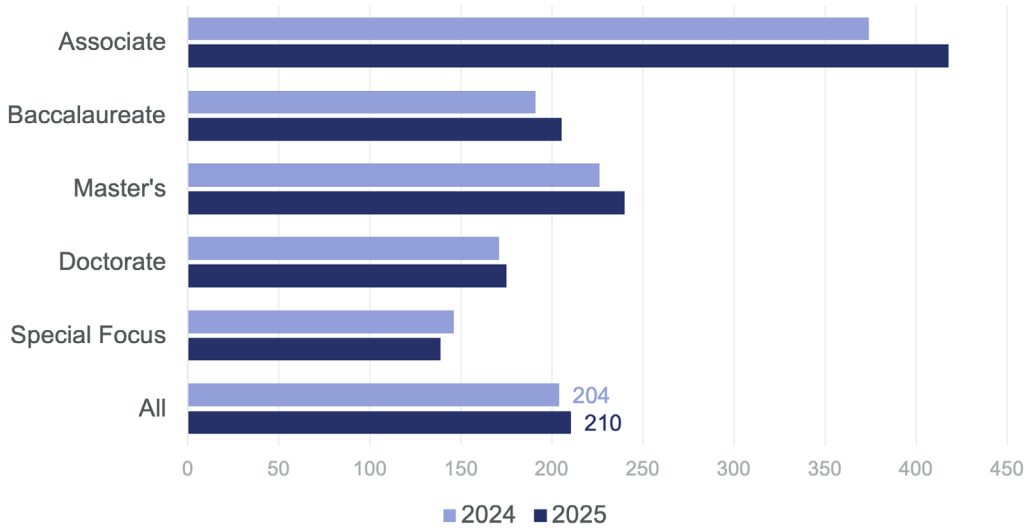

Figure 1. Full-time equivalent students per staff, 2024 and 2025. See Table 2 for detailed results.

In 2025, 33.9% of total library FTE staff are librarians, a slight decrease from 35% reported in 2024. 12.3% of the total are other professional staff, defined as those performing professional-level tasks who, though not librarians, have equivalent education and training in related fields. By institutional classification (Figure 2), associate and doctorate institutions have the highest proportion of professional staff (librarians and other professionals), while student assistants and other paid staff make up a greater proportion of the total FTE for baccalaureate and master's institutions.

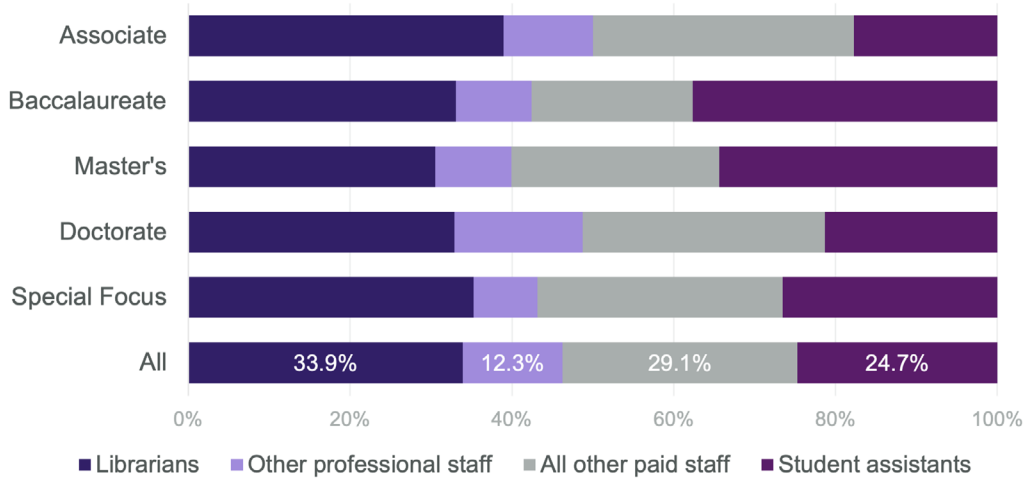

Figure 2. Staff FTE by type as percent of total. See Table 3 for detailed results.

Expenses

In 2025, academic libraries report median total expenditures of half a million dollars, excluding fringe benefits (Table 4). Overall, academic libraries spend $523 per student FTE. These numbers are very similar to 2024. However, that means when accounting for inflation, academic libraries have less spending power than in 2024. In 2025 dollars, median expenditures are 6.0% lower and expenditures per student FTE are 3.4% lower than 2024. As Figure 3 illustrates, the decline in expenditures per student FTE was greatest at baccalaureate institutions, a -13.8% change, while only master's institutions increased spending per student FTE. Static or declining budgets make it more difficult for libraries to adapt to evolving institutional needs. According to Ithaka S+R's 2025 survey of U.S. library leadership, 81% identified lack of financial resources as a the top constraint on their ability to make changes to the library.[8]

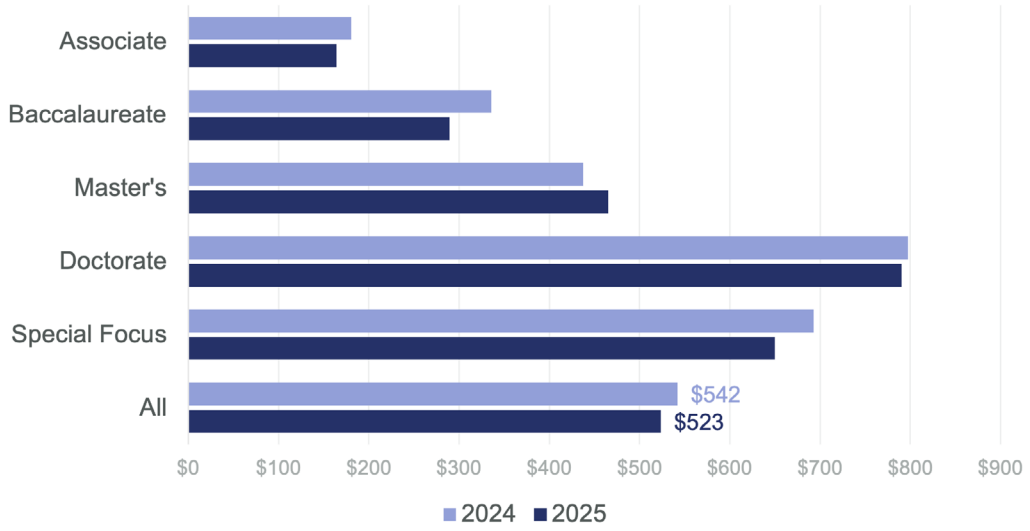

Figure 3. Expenditures per student FTE (2025 dollars). See Table 5 for detailed results.

The Trends and Statistics Survey asks respondents to break library expenditures into three major categories (Figure 4): Staff expenditures make up the largest share of the total, at 48.5% overall. Materials and services comprise 40.2% of the total. Libraries spend the smallest portion of their budgets on operations and maintenance, 11.3% of the total. By institutional classification, associate colleges spend the greatest proportion on staff salaries and wages (76.6%). Doctorate institutions spend the greatest proportion on materials (45.3%), and master's institutions spend the greatest proportion on operations and maintenance (20.2%).

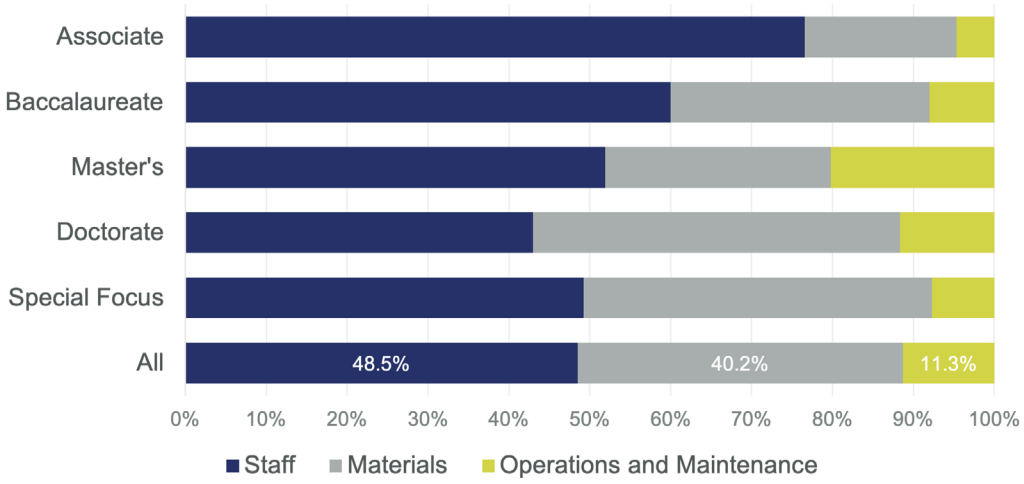

Figure 4. Expenditures by type as percent of total. See Table 6 for detailed results.

The bulk of materials expenditures go towards ongoing commitments to subscriptions, which comprise about a third of the library's total expenditures (32.6%) and more than three-quarters of materials expenditures (81.2%). Only 6.1% of total expenditures (15.1% of materials expenditures) go towards one-time purchases of books and other materials. Rising subscription costs despite static or declining budgets may mean libraries have to prioritize or cut databases or subscription services if these trends continue. Among library leaders anticipating budget decreases, 84% of respondents to Ithaka S+R's survey indicated they have already reduced spending on subscriptions.[9]

Collections and Circulation

The 2025 survey findings demonstrate a continuing focus on electronic resources. 20.3% of collection holdings are in physical format, and 79.7% in digital format, similar to 2024. The median number of physical items in a collection is 43,660, a slight decrease relative to 2024. Doctorate institutions have much larger physical collections and, as Figure 5 illustrates, a greater proportion of their total collections are in physical format (38.1%), consistent with their research focus. For associate institutions, by contrast, 95.3% of collections are in digital/electronic format.

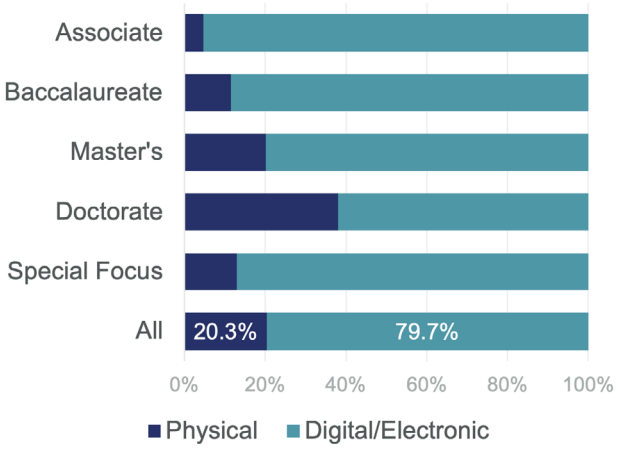

Figure 5. Collections by format as percent of total. See Table 7 for detailed results.

In 2025, academic libraries circulate 70 items annually per full-time equivalent student. The median total circulation is 35,362, a 26.6% decrease relative to 2024. Annual circulation can be challenging for libraries to capture accurately, particularly for digital materials. These metrics are prone to reporting errors, which even thorough checks cannot always catch. Consequently, reported total circulation may fluctuate year-to-year in ways that are not necessarily indicative of a long-term trend.

Usage of digital resources predominates: 98.2% of total circulation is of digital or electronic materials. The rate is highest at master's institutions (98.8%) and lowest at baccalaureate institutions (93.8%). E-serials make up the largest share of total circulation, 70.5% overall (Figure 6).

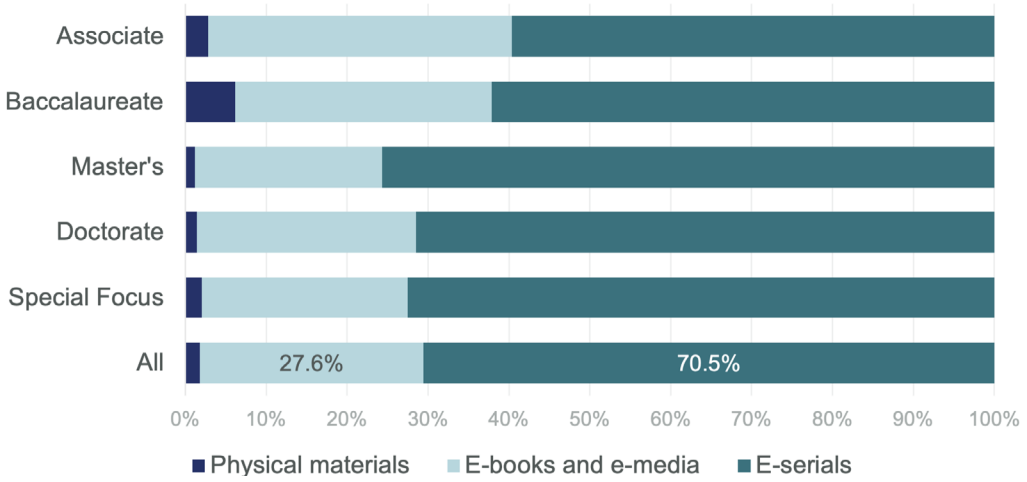

Figure 6. Circulation by format as percent of total. See Table 8 for detailed results.

Information Services and Usage

Visits to the library are captured in an annual total and a count for a typical week during the academic year. In 2025 U.S. academic libraries report a median annual gate count of 53,250, an increase of about 10% relative to 2024. On a weekly basis, the median is 1,114, about the same as reported in 2024. Annually, libraries report 31.4 visits per student FTE, an increase of 1.9% relative to 2024. Figure 7 shows slight increases across all institutional classifications. A visit to the library does not, of course, guarantee use of its services or resources.

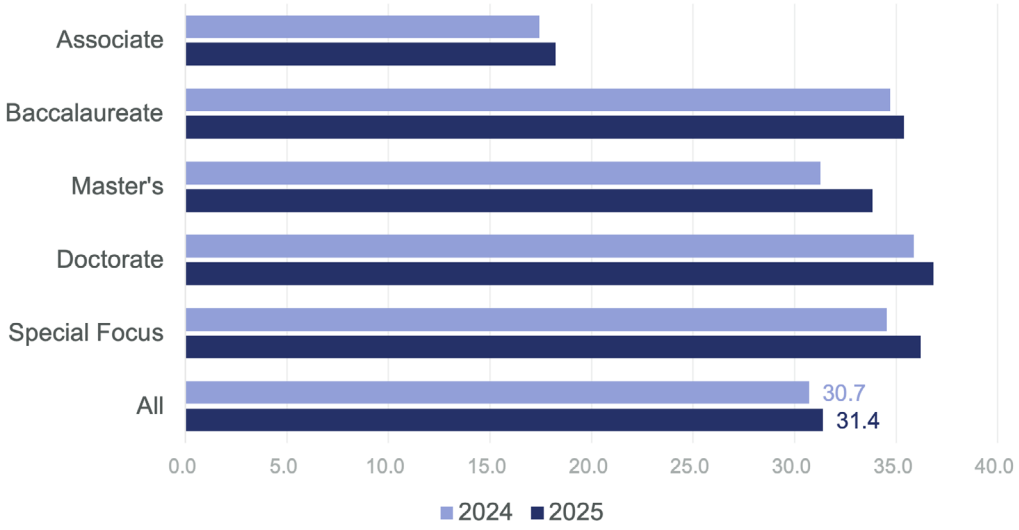

Figure 7. Annual gate count per student FTE. See Table 9 for detailed results.

While collections and spaces are central to academic libraries, so too is their educational role in developing and supporting information literate learners.[10] On campus and online, library professionals engage directly with users through one-on-one reference interactions and programs and instruction for groups. For individuals, reference transactions and consultations are broadly defined as information contacts involving the knowledge, use, recommendations, or instruction in the use of one or more resources by a library staff member. For total transactions and consultations in 2025, academic libraries report a median of 838 and a rate of 0.6 interactions per student FTE.

Virtual reference—whether via email, webform, chat, or text—accounts for almost a third (29.3%) of total transactions and consultations. At special focus institutions, about half (51.9%) of transactions and consultations happen virtually. At baccalaureate institutions, by contrast, only 7.1% are virtual (Figure 8).

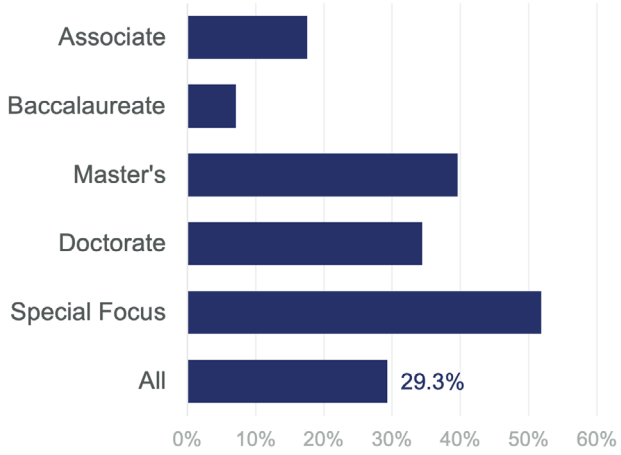

Figure 8. Virtual transactions and consultations as a percent of total. See Tables 10 and 11 for detailed results.

Where possible, reference transactions and consultations for individuals are counted separately. While both involve staff sharing knowledge and recommendations on the use of library resources, consultations are more in-depth services, often scheduled in advance, and requiring specialized expertise. Overall, transactions make up about three-quarters (74.8%) of information services for individuals, while consultations are 9%, as shown in Figure 9. The remaining 16.2% could be either type of interaction.

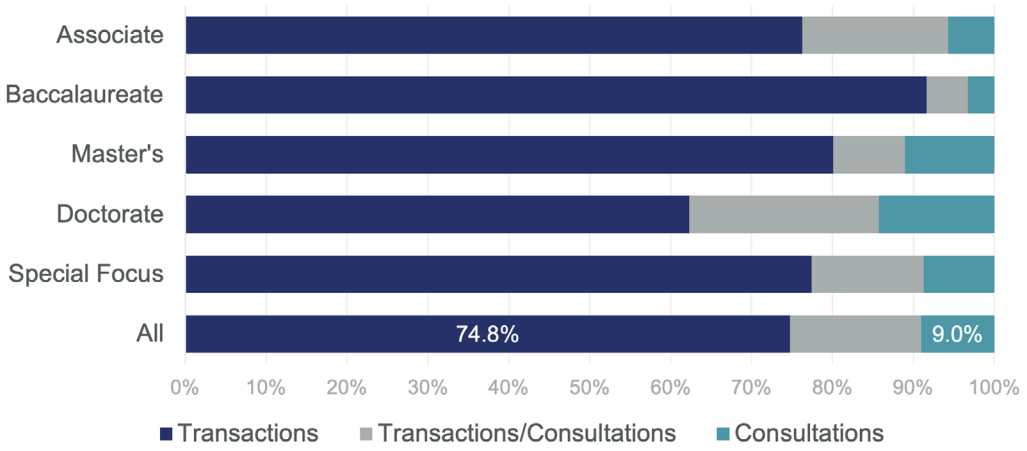

Figure 9. Information services to individuals by type as a percent of total. See Table 11 for detailed results.

Library staff regularly present to groups in instruction sessions, classes, workshops, and other programs. Libraries hold a median of 40 presentations annually, with median attendance of 552, a rate of 0.6 per student FTE (see Table 12). As Figure 10 illustrates, more than half (56.5%) of those presentations happen synchronously and account for almost three-quarters (74.9%) of total attendance. Associate institutions break this pattern, with a much smaller share of presentations (30.2%) happening synchronously, though they still account for over half (56.3%) of total attendance.

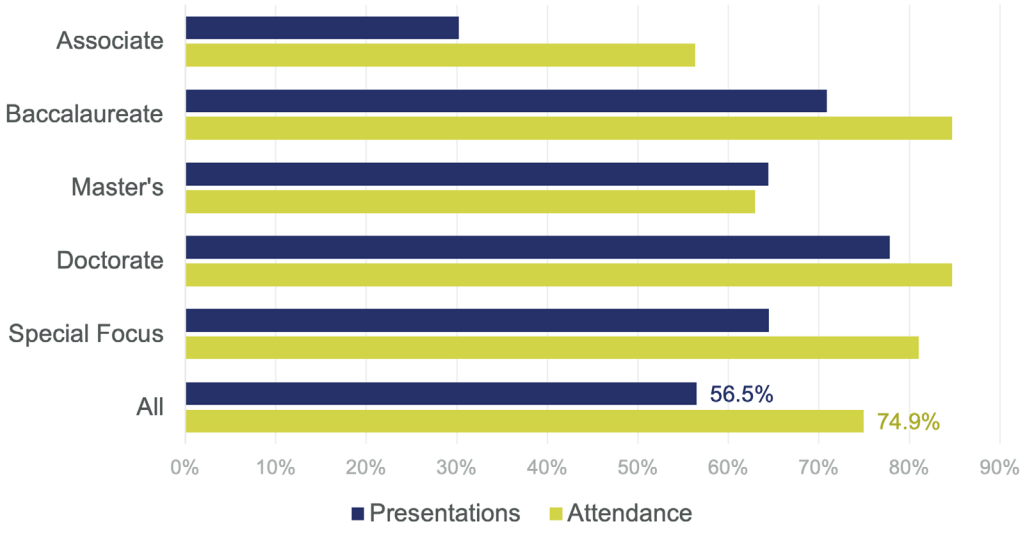

Figure 10. Synchronous presentations and attendance as percent of total. See Tables 13 and 14 for detailed results.

Conclusion

The 2025 Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey results show a field balancing evolving needs with constrained resources. While budgets and staffing levels remain static or decline, academic libraries continue to expand access to digital content, attract substantial in-person visits, and support teaching, learning, and research. Despite differences across institutional classifications, several patterns are consistent nationally: electronic resources dominate collections and use, virtual instruction and reference are established parts of library operations, and library spaces continue to draw students, faculty, and researchers.

With the discontinuation of the IPEDS Academic Libraries component, the ACRL survey is now the only source of comprehensive data on U.S. academic libraries. As higher education institutions confront financial, technological, and demographic pressures, these data are critical to help us understand the effects on academic libraries, and to advocate for the support they need. The findings suggest that maintaining expertise, access to information resources, and meaningful engagement with users will require continued investment and careful planning. The ACRL annual survey remains an important source of evidence to inform decision-making in academic libraries.

Participate in the 2026 Survey!

The 2026 Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey opened in October! It includes a trends section focused on academic and intellectual freedom. Your participation matters!

YOUR PARTICIPATION **HELPS YOUR LIBRARY**
Track your library's performance consistently over time.

YOUR PARTICIPATION **HELPS YOUR PEERS**
The more libraries that participate, the better the peer comparison data available.

YOUR PARTICIPATION **HELPS THE FIELD AT LARGE**
ACRL makes the results available to support advocacy and research.

The survey will be available in your institution's Benchmark account (**librarybenchmark.org**). Contacts associated with that account will receive an email when the survey opens. It will remain open through February 28, 2027.

Notes

1 ACRL Research and Planning Review Committee, "2026 Top Trends in Academic Libraries: A Review of the Trends and Issues," *College & Research Libraries News* 87, no.6 (June 2026): https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.87.6.233; ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, *2025 Environmental Scan* (Chicago: ACRL, 2025): https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2025_ACRL_Environmental_Scan.pdf.

2 For more information on the survey and its history, see: ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics, https://acrl.libguides.com/stats/surveyhelp.

3 ACRL survey results were weighted for the first time in 2024. Association of College and Research Libraries, *The State of U.S. Academic Libraries: Findings from the 2024 Annual Survey* (Chicago: ACRL, 2026): https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/ACRL_State_of_Academic_Libraries_Report%202024_web.pdf.

4 The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education posted a notice in March 2024 inviting open comments on proposed changes to IPEDS, including the planned elimination of the Academic Libraries component after FY 2024. Despite opposition, the proposal was approved. Department of Education, "Agency Information Collection Activities; Comment Request; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) 2024–25 Through 2026–27" (Docket No.: ED-2024-SCC-0040), Federal Register 89, no.43 (March 4, 2024): https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2024-04509.

5 American Council on Education, *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education*, 2025 Institutional Classification methodology: https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/classification-methodology/2025-institutional-classification/.

6 Simplified institutional classification categories are based on groupings used in the technical manual. American Council on Education, "Institutional Classification Technical Manual" (Oct. 10, 2025), page 5: https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Institutional-Classification-Technical-Manual.pdf.

7 Ratios reported reflect an aggregate, not an average. In this case, the student FTE per 1 library staff FTE ratio is calculated as the weighted sum of the total student FTE divided by the weighted sum of the total library staff FTE for institutions that reported both values. The result is 210 student FTE per 1 library staff FTE across all academic libraries in 2025. In mathematical terms, this is a generalized mediant or weighted mediant.

8 Ellen Carroll, Tracy Bergstrom & Ioana Hulbert, *US Library Survey 2025: Under Pressure* (Ithaka S+R, 2026: https://doi.org/10.18665/sr.325599.

9 Ibid.

10 Association of College and Research Libraries, *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* (Chicago: ACRL, 2026): https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/standardslibraries.

Tables

The tables below contain detailed results from the 2025 Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey across five simplified institutional classifications. All results are *weighted* to be representative of all U.S. academic libraries unless otherwise noted. See Appendix A for details of the methodology.

To explore the results further and create custom peer comparisons, access the full dataset with a subscription to Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends (librarybenchmark.org).

Table 1. Staffing

Survey question: 6A. Total staff (FTE)

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Median	7.0	6.7	17.5	40.0	5.0	7.6
Mean	9.9	10.1	23.6	77.3	9.9	18.9
Margin of error for mean	1.0	1.9	3.0	10.0	2.5	1.9
Response count	367	187	227	339	339	1,459

Table 2. Students FTE per Library Staff FTE

Survey questions: 6A. Total staff (FTE); 90. Degree Seeking Full-time Equivalents (FTE)

Note: The ratio calculation includes only institutions that responded to both questions.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctorate	Special Focus	All
Students per staff FTE	418	205	240	175	139	210
Response count	317	149	202	291	290	1,249
Response count	270	257	253	284	88	1,152

Table 3. Staff FTE by Type as Percent of Total

Survey questions: 1A. Librarians # of FTEs; 2A. Other professional staff # of FTEs; 4A. All Other Paid Staff (Except Student Assistants) # of FTEs; 5A. Student assistants # of FTEs

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctorate	Special Focus	All
Librarians	38.9%	33.1%	30.5%	32.9%	35.3%	33.9%
Other professional staff	11.1%	9.4%	9.4%	15.9%	7.9%	12.3%
All other paid staff	32.2%	19.9%	25.7%	29.9%	30.3%	29.1%
Student assistants	17.7%	37.7%	34.4%	21.3%	26.5%	24.7%

Table 4. Total Expenditures

Survey question: 31. Total expenditures from all identifiable sources, excludes fringe

	Associate	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctorate	Special Focus	All
Median	$396,213	$369,860	$1,114,450	$3,798,541	$325,784	$470,356
Mean	$679,401	$612,445	$2,550,963	$10,673,212	$893,774	$2,069,786
Margin of error for mean	$80,312	$114,508	$945,476	$1,625,049	$177,810	$268,012
Response count	368	187	227	339	339	1,460

Table 5. Expenditures per Student FTE

Survey questions: 31. Total expenditures from all identifiable sources, excludes fringe; 90. Degree Seeking Full-time Equivalents (FTE)

Note: The ratio calculation includes only institutions that responded to both questions.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctorate	Special Focus	All
Expenditures per student FTE	$164	$289	$465	$790	$650	$523
Response count	316	149	202	291	290	1,248

Table 6. Expenditures by Type as Percent of Total

Survey questions: 1B. Librarians salaries and wages; 2B. Other professional staff salaries and wages; 4B. All other paid staff salaries and wages; 5B. Student assistants salaries and wages; 20. One-time purchases of books, serial backfiles, and other materials; 21. Ongoing commitments to subscriptions; 22. All other materials/services costs; 24. Preservation services; 25. All other operations and maintenance expenses

Note: These results only include institutions that reported expenses in all three main categories (salaries and wages, materials/services, and operations/maintenance). Mean and median expenditures of each type are available in Benchmark.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Staffing Expenses	76.6%	60.0%	51.9%	43.0%	49.3%	48.5%
1B. Librarians salaries and wages	45.0%	35.0%	29.8%	19.8%	28.0%	25.0%
2B. Other professional staff salaries and wages	9.2%	7.7%	8.5%	9.6%	5.6%	8.7%
4B. All other paid staff salaries and wages	20.3%	12.4%	10.7%	10.9%	12.8%	12.0%
5B. Student assistants salaries and wages	2.0%	4.8%	3.0%	2.7%	2.9%	2.8%
Materials Expenses	18.7%	32.0%	27.9%	45.3%	43.0%	40.2%
***20. One-time purchases**	5.1%	3.5%	2.8%	7.2%	5.4%	6.1%
***21. Ongoing commitments to subscriptions**	12.5%	26.7%	24.1%	36.5%	36.2%	32.6%
***22. All other materials/services costs**	1.2%	1.8%	0.9%	1.6%	1.4%	1.5%

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Operations and Maintenance Expenses	4.7%	8.0%	20.2%	11.7%	7.7%	11.3%
***24. Preservation services**	0.0%	0.3%	14.9%	0.3%	0.6%	2.0%
***25. All other operations and maintenance expenses**	4.6%	7.7%	5.4%	11.4%	7.1%	9.3%

Table 7. Library Collections

Survey questions: 44A. Total physical collection; 44B. Total digital collection

Note: The percent of total results only include institutions that reported collections of both formats (including an entered response of 0).

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Physical Collection						
Median size	29,379	58,157	134,025	389,057	21,703	43,660
Mean size	36,615	87,427	226,503	1,112,187	80,689	201,480
Margin of error for mean	3,481	19,037	36,689	206,386	19,282	30,150
As percent of total	4.7%	11.5%	20.1%	38.1%	13.0%	20.3%
Digital Collection						
Median size	458,669	467,768	689,757	1,219,121	270,717	506,028
Mean size	740,017	671,137	905,027	1,801,547	540,459	787,179
Margin of error for mean	246,586	154,149	101,347	241,010	115,540	93,584
As percent of total	95.3%	88.5%	79.9%	61.9%	87.0%	79.7%
Response count	368	187	227	339	339	1,460

Table 8. Circulation

Survey questions: 60. Total Physical Circulation; 61C. Total Digital Circulation; 62. Total Usage (Physical and Digital Circulation); 90. Degree-seeking full-time equivalent students

Note: The ratio of total circulation to student FTE only includes institutions that responded to both questions.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Physical circulation						
Median	1,880	1,474	3,293	8,939	910	1,722
Mean	3,811	5,303	5,340	19,300	2,616	5,448
Margin of error for mean	805	4,762	814	2,868	590	870
As percent of total	2.8%	6.2%	1.2%	1.4%	2.0%	1.8%
Digital circulation						
Median	35,341	22,783	111,789	470,478	16,807	32,800
Mean	124,048	75,204	438,208	1,279,014	116,134	275,386
Margin of error for mean	30,015	20,342	301,417	238,722	54,153	51,183
As percent of total	97.2%	93.8%	98.8%	98.6%	98.0%	98.2%
Total circulation						
Median	40,007	27,169	116,103	474,606	18,097	35,362
Mean	127,807	80,092	443,495	1,298,167	118,726	280,642
Margin of error for mean	30,168	21,209	301,578	240,224	54,333	51,460
Per student FTE	32	40	73	96	83	70
Response count	368	187	226	339	339	1,459

Table 9. Gate Counts

Survey question: 62. Total usage (physical and digital circulation); 90. Degree-seeking full-time equivalent students

Note: The ratio of circulation to student FTE only includes institutions that responded to both questions.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Annual gate count						
Median	43,982	44,188	90,964	321,643	25,417	53,250
Mean	81,773	70,785	193,547	577,534	74,929	157,838
Per student FTE	18.2	35.4	33.8	36.8	36.2	31.4
Gate count in a typical week						
Median	1,024	1,114	2,682	7,210	558	1,114
Mean	1,912	2,120	5,949	16,179	1,770	3,917
Response count	362	187	223	333	333	1,438

Table 10. Information Services to Individuals

Survey questions: 64. Transactions; 65. Consultations; 66. Transactions and Consultations if unable to report separately; 67. Virtual Reference Services; 90. Degree-seeking full-time equivalent students

Note: Virtual reference may include both transactions and consultations and there may be overlap between the counts reported in question 67 and those reported in 64, 65, and 66. The ratio of total transactions and consultations to student FTE only includes institutions that reported both figures.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Total transactions and consultations						
Median	1,438	405	1,231	3,061	439	838
Mean	2,778	3,605	2,357	7,695	1,090	2,770
Margin of error for mean	505	4,718	420	1,415	289	713
Per student FTE	0.7	1.9	0.6	0.4	0.8	0.7
Virtual reference transactions						
Median	182	91	350	1,088	125	182
Mean	500	274	848	2,734	625	833
Margin of error for mean	94	89	242	526	383	171
Response count	332	169	213	328	312	1,354

Table 11. Information Services to Individuals by Type

Survey questions: 64. Transactions; 65. Consultations; 66. Transactions and Consultations if unable to report separately; 67. Virtual Reference Services

Note: Virtual reference may include both transactions and consultations and it is treated as a subset of the counts reported in question 67. Virtual reference as a percent of total includes only institutions that reported in question 67 and in 64, 65, and/or 66.

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Transactions	76.2%	91.6%	80.1%	62.3%	77.4%	74.8%
Transactions/Consultations	18.1%	5.1%	8.9%	23.5%	13.9%	16.2%
Consultations	5.7%	3.3%	11.0%	14.2%	8.7%	9.0%
Virtual transactions and consultations						
Percent of total	17.5%	7.1%	39.6%	34.4%	51.9%	29.3%

Table 12. Group Presentations and Attendance

Survey questions: 74. Number of All Presentations to Groups (Include Synchronous and Asynchronous); 75. Total Attendance at All Presentations to Groups (Include Synchronous and Asynchronous)

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Number of presentations						
Median	44	37	85	242	21	40
Mean	252	88	195	445	91	182
Margin of error for mean	148	31	84	100	49	46
Total attendance						
Median	629	528	1,395	4,198	211	552
Mean	1,999	1,291	3,469	8,353	993	2,362
Margin of error for mean	414	373	1,377	1,219	283	296
Per student FTE	0.6	0.8	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.6
Response count	368	187	226	339	339	1,459

Table 13. Presentations by Modality

Survey questions: 70A. Number of synchronous presentations – physical; 70B. Number of synchronous presentations – digital/electronic; 70C. Number of synchronous presentations – total (if unable to break apart); 72B. Number of asynchronous presentations – digital/electronic

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Synchronous physical	19.3%	50.1%	44.8%	37.7%	40.7%	33.4%
Synchronous digital	2.6%	3.9%	5.7%	6.4%	8.8%	5.3%
Synchronous other	8.2%	16.9%	13.9%	33.7%	14.9%	17.8%
Asynchronous	69.8%	29.1%	35.6%	22.2%	35.5%	43.5%

Table 14. Attendance at Presentations by Modality

Survey questions: 71A. Total Attendance at All Synchronous Presentations – Physical; 71B. Total Attendance at All Synchronous Presentations – Digital/Electronic; 71C. Total Attendance at All Synchronous Presentations – Total (if unable to break apart); 73B. Total Attendance at All Asynchronous Presentations – Digital/Electronic

	Associate's	Baccalaureate	Master's	Doctoral	Special Focus	All
Synchronous physical	36.5%	50.2%	44.3%	40.2%	45.5%	41.6%
Synchronous digital	3.6%	3.5%	4.6%	5.2%	8.7%	5.2%
Synchronous other	16.3%	31.1%	14.0%	39.3%	26.9%	28.1%
Asynchronous	43.7%	15.3%	37.0%	15.3%	19.0%	25.1%

Appendix A: Methodology

Sample

1,480 institutions completed surveys out of 3,575 that were invited to participate for a final response rate of 41.4%. For U.S. institutions only in 2025 the response rate is 41.2%. In 2024, the overall response rate was 39.4%, in 2023, the overall response rate was 43.2%, in 2022, the response rate was 44.5% and in 2021, 41%.

Table A1 below shows how the respondents (institutions that completed the survey) compared to all institutions invited to participate (the full population). The majority of institutions invited are U.S. academic institutions with a valid IPEDS unit ID. While 22 international institutions were invited to participate based on past interest, only 16 completed the survey in 2025. By institutional classification, special focus institutions are underrepresented among respondents, while master's and doctoral universities are overrepresented. The use of nonprobability sample weights—as detailed below—corrects for nonresponse bias.

Table A1.

		Completed		All institutions in sample	
Institutional classification	**Response rate**	**Count**	**% of total**	**Count**	**% of total**
Associate	41.8%	368	24.9%	881	24.6%
Baccalaureate	44.4%	187	12.6%	421	11.8%
Master's	63.6%	227	15.3%	357	10.0%
Doctorate	73.1%	339	22.9%	464	13.0%
Special Focus	24.0%	343	23.2%	1,430	40.0%
International	72.7%	16	1.1%	22	0.6%
All Institutions	41.4%	1,480		3,575	

Institutional Classifications

In the 2025 institutional classification framework, all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions are organized into 31 classifications based on multiple dimensions including award level focus, academic program mix, and size.[1] For the purposes of this report, institutions were grouped into five primary categories: associate, baccalaureate, master's, doctorate, and special focus. Where comparisons are made between 2024 and 2025 survey results by institutional classification, the 2025 classifications are used.

- Associate
  - Mixed Associate Large
  - Mixed Associate Medium
  - Mixed Associate Small
  - Professions-focused Associate Large/Medium
  - Professions-focused Associate Small

- Baccalaureate
  - Mixed Associate/Baccalaureate
  - Professions-focused Associate/Baccalaureate
  - Mixed Baccalaureate
  - Professions-focused Baccalaureate Medium
  - Professions-focused Baccalaureate Small

- Master's
  - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium
  - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small
  - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Large/Medium
  - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Master's Small

- Doctorate
  - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large
  - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
  - Mixed Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small
  - o Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Large
  - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Medium
  - Professions-focused Undergraduate/Graduate-Doctorate Small

- Special Focus
  - Special Focus: Applied and Career Studies
  - Special Focus: Arts and Sciences
  - Special Focus: Arts, Music, and Design
  - Special Focus: Business
  - Special Focus: Graduate Studies
  - Special Focus: Law
  - Special Focus: Medical Schools and Centers
  - Special Focus: Nursing
  - Special Focus: Other Health Professions
  - Special Focus: Technology, Engineering, and Sciences
  - Special Focus: Theological Studies
  - Not classified

Survey Design

The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey is administered annually and is designed to gather information at the national level from all types of academic libraries. It took its current form in 2015, incorporating questions from the Academic Libraries component of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a selection of measures previously collected on the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Academic Libraries Survey, and a selection of questions about library trends that changes each year. The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board develops the trends questions and works to revise the survey instrument as needed to reduce respondent burden and meet the needs of the field.

The main sections on the 2025 survey were: Reporting Structure; Staffing Types, FTEs, and Expenses; Expenses (Exclude Staff); Library Collections; Library Services; Local Characteristics; Other; Notes; and 2025 Trends. The only change to reporting in 2025 was reordering of the interlibrary loan questions within the Library Services section. See the **ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics LibGuide** for links to the 2025 survey instructions and worksheet.

The 2025 Trends and Statistics Survey opened on October 28. 2025 and closed on April 9, 2026. ACRL mailed print survey invitations to all institutions, and emailed invitations to all institutions for which contact details are on file in Benchmark (not all may have received the email due to missing or outdated contact information). In addition, the survey was publicized via ACRL communications and the website. Several email reminders were sent while the survey remained open. Responses were collected through ACRL's data platform, Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends (**librarybenchmark.org**).

Notes on Data Checks

ACRL took over administration of the annual surveys in-house in 2021. Since that time, staff have actively worked with members of the Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board to improve the quality of the data collected. This includes regular checks of submitted responses to verify their completeness, correct or remove errors (e.g., negative values, outliers), and check questions with multiple reporting methods to minimize duplication or mismatched results.

The questions about information services to individuals, information services to groups, and interlibrary loans all offer respondents the option of either reporting a single total or a more detailed breakdown. This is intended to give respondents maximum flexibility and account for different tracking methods used by different institutions. However, while the instructions specify that the single total should only be entered if unable to report separately, many respondents report both a total and a breakdown, and sometimes the sum of the numbers reported separately does not match the total. ACRL staff followed up with the responding institutions to request corrections where needed. For example, for information services to individuals, if an institution responded to *both* 64. Transactions *and* 65. Consultations and 66. Transactions and Consultations if unable to report separately, and if the sum of 64 plus 65 was equal to 66, then the value entered in 66 was removed to avoid duplication in the analysis.

Weighting

Weighting the survey data means that the results presented are representative of all U.S. academic libraries. It accounts for differences between the responding institutions and the population of all U.S. institutions with academic libraries. Without weights, results can only be said to reflect the respondents, and those respondents are not representative. In ACRL's survey sample, doctoral universities tend to be overrepresented, while associate's colleges tend to be underrepresented, as shown in Table A1 above. Unweighted results, therefore, are skewed by the larger, doctoral-granting institutions that respond at higher rates.

The ACRL Trends and Statistics Survey Editorial Board approved a proposal to weight the results to account for differences between responding institutions and all institutions starting with the 2024 survey year. This approach has been used by the Public Library Association for their **annual surveys** since 2021. All institutions with academic libraries are invited to participate in the survey and the use of nonprobability sample weighting corrects for differences between the sample and the full population as detailed below. Weighting the ACRL

annual survey results will ensure that the academic library field has access to representative data after the elimination of the IPEDS Academic Libraries component. ACRL opted to start applying weights for the 2024 survey to test reliability and make refinements as needed while comprehensive IPEDS data was still collected through FY 2024.

The weighted results for 2024 and 2025 are not directly comparable to previous years of ACRL data, which were unweighted. For this reason, the current report does not provide longitudinal analysis. Future reports, with multiple years of weighted data, will present results over time. Researchers conducting their analysis should consult the Benchmark resource, "**Weighted Results**."

Nonprobability Sample Weights

To calculate weights for the 2025 ACRL Academic Trends and Statistics Survey, because all academic institutions with libraries were invited to complete the survey and the response rate was 41 percent, nonprobability sample weighting was used to calculate final weights for responding institutions.[2] This quasi-randomization approach corrects for nonresponse bias—the sample differs from the rest of the population such that the results from the sample cannot be projected to the full population—by using a probability-based reference sample to estimate pseudo-inclusion probabilities for the responding institutions. In this case, the sample of responding institutions (n = 1,460) was combined with the reference sample of nonresponding institutions (n = 2,060). This combined sample covered the total population (N = 3,520) of institutions with academic libraries represented in the 2024 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) sample that reported total expenditures and total FTE staff.

Weighting Procedure

Weights were assigned to 1,460 academic institutions that (1) responded to the survey and (2) had data in IPEDS. For a given responding institution, the final weight was calculated by:

1. Coding the institutions in the reference sample as 0 and responding institution as 1.
2. Assigning a probability sample weight to institutions in the reference sample (w = N/n) and the institutions that responded to the survey (w = 1).
3. Fitting a binary regression using the following institution characteristics to predict the probability of being in the sample of responding institutions. IPEDS variable names appear in parentheses:

    - HD2024_CARNEGIE_CLASSIFICATION_2025_INSTITUTIONAL CLASSIFICATION (IC2025): The 2025 Institutional Classifications update and replace the framework historically known as the Basic Classification. Each accredited, degree-granting U.S. institution is assigned to one of 31 classifications based on multiple dimensions including award level focus, academic program mix, and size.
    - HD2024_INSTITUTION_SIZE_CATEGORY (INSTSIZE): Each institution is assigned to one of five categories: Under 1,000; 1,000–4,999; 5,000–9,999; 10,000–19,999; 20,000 and above.
    - HD2024_CONTROL_OF_INSTITUTION (CONTROL): A classification of whether an institution is operated by publicly elected or appointed officials or by privately elected or appointed officials and derives its major source of funds from private sources. Each institution is assigned to one of three categories: Private for-profit, Private not-for-profit, or Public.

- DRVEF2024_TOTAL_ENROLLMENT (ENRTOT): Total men and women enrolled for credit in the fall of the academic year.
- DRVHR2024_TOTAL_FTE_STAFF (SFTETOTL): Total FTE staff is the sum of all FTE staff by occupational category.
- DRVHR2024_LIBRARIANS_CURATORS_AND_ARCHIVISTS_FTE (SFTELCAI): Librarians, Curators, and Archivists FTE = Full-time Librarians, Curators, and Archivists (plus (1/3 of part-time Librarians, Curators, and Archivists). This category is based on the 2018 Standard Occupational Classification Manual from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- EXP_TOTAL: Total institution expenditures. In IPEDS, expenditures are reported under separate variables based on institution control. This calculated variable combines F2E131 (total expenses, private not-for-profit institutions), F3E071 (total expenses, private for-profit institutions), and F1C191 (total expenses, public institutions). Each single institution reports in only one of those categories.
- EXP_ACSUPPORT: Total academic support expenditures. In IPEDS, expenditures are reported under separate variables based on institution control. This calculated variable combines F2E041 (academic support, private not-for-profit institutions), F3E03A1 (academic support, private for-profit institutions), and F1C051 (academic support, public institutions).

4. Calculating the inverse probability for each institution that responded to the survey ($w_{np} = 1/P$).

An additional 20 academic institutions not represented in IPEDS were assigned a weight of 0 for a total number of 1,480 institutions in the analytic sample. Those 20 institutions include 4 U.S. institutions without valid current IPEDS identifiers, and 16 international institutions.

Estimate Precision. The IPEDS population-level data was used to check how effective weighting was for estimating mean values across a number of variables. For example, the mean *Total Enrollment* for all institutions was 5,492. Before weighting, the mean *Total Enrollment* in the sample of responding institutions was 8,862—higher in responding institutions than in the institution population. After weighting, the population estimate for the mean *Total Enrollment* was 4,904 (se = 254.58)—closer to the population mean. These results indicate that the weights were effective in reducing nonresponse bias.

Margin of Error. The margin of error is included for the weighted mean in select tables. It reflects how precise the estimates are and is calculated based on a 95% confidence interval. In other words, we are 95% certain that the true population value lies between the upper and lower limit of the confidence intervals. This range can be represented using the margin of error and is calculated by multiplying the standard error by the z-score (1.96) associated with a 95% confidence interval. For example, the weighted mean for the total staff FTE (question 6A) is 18.90 with a margin of error of +/- 1.91. This means we are 95% certain that the population value (the average total staff FTE) lies between 16.99 and 20.81.

Appendix Notes

1 American Council on Education, "Institutional Classification Technical Manual" (Oct. 10, 2025), page 5: https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Institutional-Classification-Technical-Manual.pdf

2 Valliant, R., Dever, J.A., & Kreuter, F. (2018). *Practical tools for designing and weighting survey samples.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-93632-1