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FLORIDA LIBRARIES

FALL 2025

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

OPINIONS FOR AND AGAINST

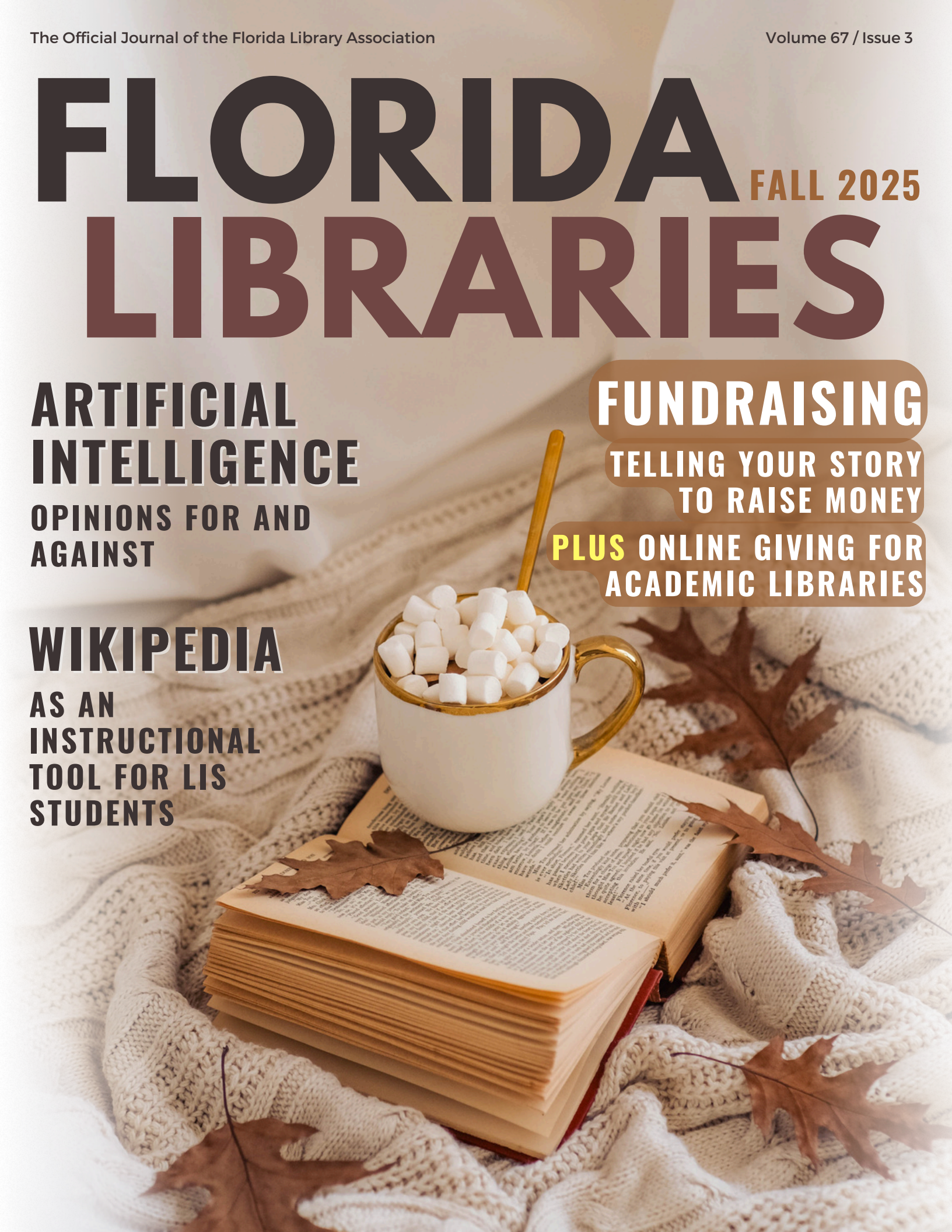
FUNDRAISING

TELLING YOUR STORY TO RAISE MONEY

PLUS ONLINE GIVING FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

WIKIPEDIA

AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL FOR LIS STUDENTS

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CONTENTS

*** INDICATES PEER REVIEWED**

FROM THE EDITOR

MARY DANIELS

The news is bad, and we can't escape it. While I definitely recommend whatever trickery you must perform to maintain balance between remaining informed and protecting your mental health (dedicate a certain amount of time to the news per day, only read yesterday's news, subscribe to only one news-based resource/newsletter, etc.), I also think there's value in disconnecting. Get off your phone. Turn off your push notifications for a weekend. Attend your library programs and *be there* in a greater capacity than just the person running the event. Have in-person conversations with your patrons and coworkers. Volunteer to help your community. Laugh with friends.

And remember that even now, not *all* the news is bad:

- Reading Rainbow returned with Mychal Threets as the new host!
- George Takei, longtime actor, author, and activist, was the chair of this year's Banned Books Week initiative.
- The ALA presented USF's Natalie Taylor, an associate professor and director of the College of Arts and Sciences' School of Information, with the Beta Phi Mu Award for her distinguished service to education for librarianship.
- Dan Pelzer, an Ohio man who read 100 pages every day since 1962, passed away this year. His local library has memorialized his legacy by making his book list, which he kept meticulously for more than 60 years, available to the public.
- Florida court ruled in favor of the freedom to read in Penguin Random House v. Gibson case. This partially strikes down the stringent book ban laws passed in 2023, establishing them as "overbroad" and "unconstitutional."
    - Penguin Random House is engaged in similar legal proceedings throughout the country.
- Robin G. Shader's article in this issue (page 27) shows empirically that the majority of citizens are against censorship.
- Authors Against Book Bans launched a successful letter-writing campaign in St. Johns County, FL, which helped secure a win for keeping books on school library shelves.
- The Federal Court in Rhode Island granted summary judgment to 21 states' attorneys general, ruling that attempts to dismantle the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) were unlawful, unconstitutional, and in violation of Congress's statutory directives.
- Cards Against Humanity is donating 100% of the proceeds from a new expansion pack to the ALA.
- Pinellas County schools decided not to remove Sunshine State Young Readers Award-winning *Out of the Blue* from school shelves.
- The 2025 documentary The Librarians is still generating buzz, and is set to have a limited release in cities throughout the US.
- Brooklyn's "Books Unbanned" initiative just hit one million e-book check-outs to nationwide readers!
- EveryLibrary raised $35 million in support of libraries in the first half of the year.
- And lastly, just for laughs, McSweeney's released a list of collective nouns for librarians and other bookish people, places, and things.

If you have more good news to share, please let me know at journal@flalib.org. I wish a safe and happy fall/winter season to you all. Keep up the hard work, and we'll see you in the New Year!

MARY DANIELS, MLIS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FROM THE PRESIDENT

ALLISON GRUBBS

Hello and welcome to the Fall edition of the *Florida Libraries* journal. Thank you for allowing me the wonderful opportunity to serve as your President. In fact, thankfulness is the theme of today's message. As the weather grows cooler, and we snuggle down into our warmer clothes, blankets, and (for some lucky few) by a fireplace, I hope we all take some time to contemplate that for which we are thankful. Gratitude is not a passive endeavor, but an active force which shapes how we lead, how we serve, and how we connect with one another. In the context of libraries, thankfulness becomes a lens through which we see the immense value of our profession, the dedication of our colleagues, and the trust of the communities we serve.

As we all are all keenly aware, libraries are not simply a repository of books, but also pillars of democracy. They safeguard intellectual freedom, nurture curiosity, and provide equitable access to knowledge. Gratitude for libraries reminds me that our work is not merely administrative but rather a moral commitment to uphold equity and access for all.

Speaking of our work, I am incredibly grateful for the library workers who are the heartbeat of our association. Your dedication inspires me to lead with humility. As president, I see myself not as an authority figure but as a steward ensuring you, as library professionals, have the recognition, resources, and support you deserve. Some of that support comes through partnerships which allow libraries to thrive; partnerships with schools, universities, local governments, nonprofits, and businesses. I am so thankful for the collaborations that keep us open to new ideas and which strengthen our ability to serve Floridians in meaningful ways.

How do we build these collaborations? Through advocacy, which is central to FLA's mission. Advocacy requires persistence, diplomacy, and courage. Gratitude in advocacy reminds us that progress is not achieved by a single leader but by a chorus of voices united in purpose.

That purpose allows us to constantly evolve to meet the needs of our communities. Speaking of community, the Florida Library Association itself is a vibrant network of professionals, advocates, and supporters. I am thankful for the board members who dedicate countless hours to governance and strategy, the committee members who guide initiatives with passion and expertise, and the overall membership, whose diverse perspectives ensure our association reflects the richness of Florida itself.

From digital collections to makerspaces, from virtual programming to AI-driven tools, the landscape of information services is dynamic. Gratitude for innovation fuels optimism and reminds me that libraries are not relics of the past but laboratories of the future, built to be deeply personal spaces where lives are changed. I know my life has changed for the better due to the libraries I interacted with from my childhood through today.

On a personal level, thankfulness sustains me in moments of challenge. Leadership can be demanding, filled with difficult decisions and competing priorities. Yet gratitude transforms these challenges into opportunities. Thankfulness is not naïve optimism; it is a discipline that reframes obstacles as stepping stones. As president of the Florida Library Association, I believe thankfulness is more than a personal virtue, it is a collective practice. It shapes how we lead, how we serve, and how we envision the future of libraries in Florida. In embracing gratitude, we not only acknowledge what has been given to us but also commit ourselves to giving back. Thankfulness is the foundation of leadership, the heartbeat of service, and the guiding light of our association.

As I reflect on my role, I am filled with gratitude—gratitude for the privilege of serving, for the resilience of libraries, and for the promise of a future where knowledge and community continue to flourish across Florida.

Allison Grubbs

ALLISON GRUBBS
FLA PRESIDENT, 2025-26

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JENNIFER K. ABDELNOUR, CAE

The recent closure of the Florida Library Association's physical office has me thinking about the challenges of managing change. Quite a bit. It's been inescapable, actually. I have always considered myself to be quite an adaptable person, but this move tested even my abilities. Here are my tips for managing change in the workplace.

Preparing for Change

Regularly scanning your horizon for threats and opportunities is a good general practice in any profession. Staying alert and not only expecting, but planning for change, will make the inevitable change(s) less stressful and more productive. And being planful, as much as is practical and realistically doable, will make your work life more manageable. That said, this is much easier said than done! Change is hard, and it's just impossible to forecast every possible pitfall that may befall you.

Asking for Help

Asking for help is not a weakness. People generally want to help more than you might expect. Define tasks that can be delegated and then…delegate them! Trying to manage change in a silo is detrimental to your staff and colleagues, your organization, and your own mental health.

Communicating

You almost can't communicate enough during significant change. It's important to keep your stakeholders in the know about your plans, processes, and expected results. Frequently communicating the status of your change-making projects can help alleviate anxiety and ambiguity about what has happened or will happen.

Setting Boundaries and Managing Expectations

Knowing your and your staff's and peers' realistic capabilities and limitations will help prepare you to set necessary boundaries to protect your time, effort, and honestly, your sanity! Along these lines, managing the expectations of your colleagues and the general public are critical to minimizing disappointments and misunderstandings.

Here's wishing you success in managing the changes in your work life!

Season's Greetings to all,

Jennifer K. Abdelnour

JENNY ABDELNOUR, CAE
FLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEET THE **EDITORIAL BOARD**

EDITOR-IN CHIEF

Mary Daniels

Mary Daniels is the Materials and Marketing Manager at the Maitland Public Library, where she has worked since 2013. She graduated from USF with her MLIS, and has her Bachelors in English from UCF. She is passionate about writing, literacy, intellectual freedom, and the library field, and has worked on *Florida Libraries* since 2019.

FLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jenny Abdelnour

Jennifer K. Abdelnour, CAE, is FLA's Executive Director. Jenny's background includes more than 25 years working in leadership development, public policy, public relations, communications, conference management, and association management. Jenny earned an M.A. in political science with a concentration in applied politics from American University's School of Public Affairs and a B.S. in Criminology from Florida State University. In addition, she earned and maintains the Certified Association Executive (CAE) credential from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). Jenny is a member of the Florida Society of Association Executives and ASAE.

COPY EDITOR

Sarah Paige

Sarah Paige works with eResources and online learning as an assistant librarian for Eastern Florida State College, where she has worked since 2018. She also is the discipline manager for the EFSC Librarians, advocating for them within the college. Sarah graduated with her MSLS from the University of North Texas in Denton, TX, and her Bachelor's in English from Lewis & Clark College in Portland, OR. She loves words and libraries and is happy to combine the two by collaborating with each issue's authors and her fellow editors. She owns a rescue dog named Gracie and loves cold weather when it arrives in Florida (she is still a Vermonter at heart).

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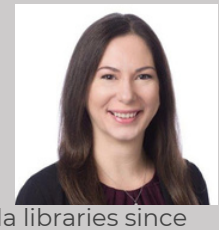

Kari Calicchio

Kari Calicchio is the Assistant Library Director at Dunedin Public Library and oversees reference, adult programs, and technical services. She has worked in Florida libraries since 2013 and is excited to further the sharing of ideas among library and information professionals throughout the state.

COPY EDITOR

Rebecca Greer

Rebecca Greer is the Middle and High School Library Media Specialist for Manatee School for the Arts. In her previous life, she was a Young Adult Librarian for almost ten years, specializing in running large-scale programs, including Teen Lit Fest, an author festival in Tampa, FL which she headed for three years. Rebecca writes book reviews for School Library Journal focusing on books for Young Adults, and several of her programs have been published in "Think Big!: A Resource Manual for Teen Library Programs That Attract Large Audiences."

COPY EDITOR

Sara Hack

Sara Hack is a Reference and Instruction Librarian at St. Petersburg College. She has a background in both public and academic libraries. She is currently a Doctoral Student at St. Thomas University studying Educational Leadership. She received her MLIS from USF and her B.A. in Anthropology and Sociology from FIU. She has been a copy editor for *Florida Libraries* since August 2022 and has enjoyed every minute of it. In her spare time, you will probably find her at a tea shop trying their new drinks.

COPY EDITOR

Sylvie Daubar-San Juan

Sylvie Daubar-San Juan holds an MLIS degree and an MA in Art History. She works as a Learning Resources Librarian at Miami Dade College - Wolfson Campus in downtown Miami. An article she wrote was published in the Fall/Winter 2022-2023 issue of *Florida Libraries*, and she serves on the Editorial Board. Sylvie is the current ALA NMRT Online Programs Chair and is also a member of the FLA Intellectual Freedom Committee. She was recently a presenter at the 2024 FLA Conference in Orlando.

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BUILDING STRONGER LIBRARIES THROUGH FRIENDS AND LEADERSHIP PARTNERSHIPS

BY FRED HARVEY

Public libraries stand as vital centers of learning, connection, and community enrichment. In my 37 years of experience working alongside libraries across the country and internationally, one consistent truth has emerged: libraries achieve their greatest impact when they are supported not only by professional staff and leadership, but also by engaged community advocates. Among the most powerful of these advocates are Friends of the Library groups.

A well-organized Friends group does more than raise funds or organize events. It serves as a bridge between the library and the broader community, amplifying the library's mission and creating deeper connections with those it serves. The Orange County Library System in Orlando, where I proudly serve on the Friends of the Library board, is a strong example of how this relationship can flourish when a Friends group and library leadership work in harmony.

Recruitment: Bringing in the Right Voices

Recruitment of new members is the lifeblood of any Friends organization. Successful Friends groups seek out individuals who bring diverse skills, backgrounds, and perspectives. Volunteers with expertise in marketing, event planning, finance, or community outreach can all strengthen the group's ability to support the library. Recruitment is not simply about numbers; it is about inviting in voices that reflect the full diversity of the community. By doing so, Friends groups expand the library's reach and ensure broader representation in advocacy efforts.

Fred Harvey is a longtime supporter and advocate for libraries. A Central Florida resident since 1991, he has over 37 years of experience serving libraries worldwide and continues to champion the vital role libraries play in education and community life.

Support: Working Alongside, Not Above or Apart

True support of the library means listening to leadership, aligning with strategic goals, and complementing, not competing with, the library's work. Friends organizations thrive when they understand the library's priorities, whether that is advancing digital access, promoting early literacy, or expanding community programming. By tailoring support efforts to those priorities, Friends groups help ensure that resources and energy are directed where they are needed most.

Harmony: Building Lasting Relationships

At the heart of any strong relationship between a Friends group and a library is mutual respect. Library directors and staff bring professional expertise while Friends groups bring community perspective and advocacy power. When these two entities operate in harmony, they create a multiplier effect, expanding the library's ability to innovate, reach underserved populations, and remain at the forefront of community life. Harmony also requires regular communication and transparency. Open dialogue fosters trust, keeps goals aligned, and allows both Friends and library leadership to celebrate successes together.

The Shared Mission

Ultimately, the Friends of the Library and library leadership share the same mission: to strengthen the library's role as an essential public good. When Friends groups recruit thoughtfully, support strategically, and work cohesively with leadership, they elevate not only the library itself but the entire community served.

Libraries remain one of the most trusted and accessible institutions in our society. By working together as professionals, volunteers, and community advocates, we ensure that libraries will continue to thrive and adapt for generations to come.

TELLING YOUR STORY

TO RAISE FUNDS FOR YOUR LIBRARY

BY DWAIN POSEY TEAGUE (MLS, MA)
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JOHNSTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION

Are you effectively telling your story and promoting funding priorities for your library to your constituents and stakeholders? Here are some easy ways to ensure that your constituents remain aware of your current and future funding priorities for your library. Also, learn easy ways to maintain strong relationships with your donors. What's great about these suggestions is they are cost- and time-efficient!

Case for Support

Ensure that you have a concise case for support for the variety of funding priorities for your library. Briefly describe the funding priorities (i.e. needs) and explain why they are needed and how they will benefit your library, your constituents, your community, etc.

For example: *Due to increased demand from our users, the Smith Library needs to purchase new equipment for our makerspace. Last year, 200 people utilized the makerspace! A gift of $2,000 will enable us to purchase two PRUSE CORE ONE 3D printers. Our library users utilize these printers to create models, adaptive equipment, etc. Learn more about this amazing technology by clicking here. Please contact us at 555-555-5555 or at development@smithlibrary.edu to learn more!*

Website

Promote funding priorities for your library on your website.

- Do you have a "Support the Library" icon on your homepage? If not, consider creating a landing page that focuses on your funding priorities, ways to give, ways to contact your library with questions about giving, etc.
- Include a hyperlink to your online giving site in your email signature line.

A "Did You Know?" List

Creating a menu of funding priorities for your library with a brief description is a great way to easily promote giving. This can be shared via social media, email, your website, or presented at board/civic group meetings.

Example: *Did You Know?*

- *A gift of $100 can fund two children's collection activity/reading events?*
- *A gift of $500 can purchase 20 new hard copy editions for the circulating collection?*
- *A gift of $1,000 can purchase a new 3D printer for the makerspace?*
- *A gift of $10,000 can name the conference room (or preservation lab, makerspace, etc.)*

Ways to Give

Promote the variety of ways donors can financially support your library:

- Outright support via check, credit card, debit card, etc.
- Donor-advised funds.
- Transfer of appreciated stocks.
- Life Insurance and Retirement Fund beneficiary designations.
- Bequests via one's Will/Estate**.**

TELLING YOUR STORY TO RAISE FUNDS FOR YOUR LIBRARY

Friends of the Library

Effectively utilize your Friends of the Library Board to serve as fundraising advocates for your library.

- Provide board members with "talking points" regarding your top funding priorities.
- If funding allows, hire a consultant to work with your board to help them learn more about the vital role they play in helping with library fundraising and to provide hands-on training for them to practice their "elevator pitch." You never know when a board member may have an opportunity to have a meaningful conversation with someone who could be your next big donor!
- Invite board members for VIP/Behind the Scenes tours of your library so they can learn more about the inner workings of your library… from Collection Development procedures and conservation to the book drop!
- Encourage board members to help introduce potential donors from their networks to the library.
- Ask board members to host events at their home or office so you can tell your story to new potential donors!

Donor Engagement

Stay engaged with your donors!

- A handwritten thank-you note or get-well card makes a tremendous impact on the library-donor relationship.
- Create an email distribution list of your donors/stakeholders and use it to update them with snippets of library news, updates, short and long-term funding priorities, etc.
- Send brief videos to your donors to wish them happy birthday, thank them for their recent gift, congratulate them on a life event, or provide a personalized video tour of a renovated space that they haven't been able to see yet. Your smart phone is an amazing tool in your fundraising toolkit!
- Create donor profiles (with the donor's permission).
    - A donor profile explaining why a donor supports and loves your library is a wonderful way to steward (i.e. thank) that donor. Also, donor profiles can motivate others to give as well.
- A cost-effective way to engage your donors is to personally invite them to your library events, special occasions, behind-the-scenes tours, etc. These opportunities enable you to not only maintain a personal connection with them, but they also enable the donor to see first-hand how the library is operating and how their additional philanthropic support can benefit the library. A donor who is invested in your library will continue to be a loyal donor.

Sharing the story of your library funding priorities is vitally important to securing philanthropic support. It also ensures that you maintain a consistent "pipeline" of new potential donors. Donors give because they are moved by a case for support, because they are invested in the library, because they are kept engaged, and because they are asked. Don't be shy! Proudly tell your story and see increased donor support for your library.

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Christine E. Woods, Ed.D.
Cannon D. Memorial Library, Saint Leo University

Abstract
This study examined two research questions. How many academic libraries in Florida offer an online donation option on their library website? How many academic libraries in Florida have “Friends of the Library” type groups? Other relevant issues included the growth and trust of online donation systems, as well as the ease and convenience of locating them on university and library websites. A total of 67 university websites and academic library websites of four-year colleges and universities in Florida were examined, comprising 38 public and 29 private institutions. This study found that 22 percent of academic library webpages and 90 percent of university webpages featured a link to an online donation system for year-round giving. The number of library websites featuring information about “Friends of the Library” or similar groups was 13 percent. Looking ahead, academic libraries must invest in resources and strategic planning for effective fundraising. Despite funding challenges, practical solutions exist within current frameworks. By utilizing university online donation systems, creating targeted appeals, and fostering community support through advisory groups, libraries can more effectively secure resources to sustain and enhance their educational mission.

Online Donations and Support Groups on Academic Library Websites in Florida
During a previous research study of academic libraries’ websites in Florida, researchers noticed that a few library websites offered online donation opportunities.[1] This observation invited a follow-up study. Many academic libraries have faced budget and staff cuts within the past five years, necessitating the raising of funds through various means. Online donations through a link on the library website appear to be an easy way to supplement budgets.

Review of Relevant Literature
This literature review aims to examine why academic libraries might consider online donations as a viable means to raise funds. Other relevant issues are the growth and trust of online donation systems and the ease and convenience of locating them on university and library websites.

Current Funding Challenges Facing Academic Libraries
Since 2010, Ithaka S+R has conducted a survey of library directors of four-year colleges and universities in the United States. A special 2020 survey was done to assess the impact of COVID on academic libraries. The study, completed in September 2020, found that 75 percent of library directors were operating with reduced budgets, while an additional 20 percent were dealing with expenditure limitations and freezes.[2] The majority of directors made cuts from three areas: collections, staffing, and facilities and operations. Doctoral-granting institutions made cuts to staffing more than master’s and baccalaureate-granting institutions. Public universities made higher cuts to both staffing and operations. An article by Adler, the library director at Georgetown College, explained how staffing was cut four years in a row, starting during COVID.[3] Berg et al. did a study that explained how austerity measures, which were implemented during the pandemic, continued to affect staff and their morale in New Jersey academic libraries.[4] The 2022 iteration of the US Library Survey by Ithaka S+R indicated that some progress was being made to repair budgets that were cut during the COVID-19 pandemic.[5] The positive findings from the report showed that: 25 percent of library directors expected an increase in the collections budget; 44 percent expected it to stay the same; a 22 percent increase and 52 percent status quo in the staffing budget; and a 13 percent increase in operations and 63 percent expected to stay the same. Master’s granting institutions had the highest percentages of decreases in budgets, with 40 percent expecting decreases in collections budgets and 35 percent expecting staffing cuts. Continued decreases in funding for many academic libraries showed the ongoing impact of spending freezes, austerity measures, and staff cuts that were meant to be temporary solutions during the pandemic. These cuts have significantly impacted the services that libraries can provide, raising concerns about the potential loss of resources.

1. Woods and Stoupenos, 2024
2. Frederick and Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020
3. Adler, 2024
4. Cara Berg et al., 2022
5. Hulbert, 2022

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Decreased Federal and State Support for Public Universities and Programs

Recent legislation, specifically the H.R.1 One Big Beautiful Bill Act, became a law on July 4, 2025. According to Attridge and Johnson on the Best Colleges website, this bill will impact the funding of some universities, potentially leading to layoffs or hiring freezes, and will affect graduate students due to cuts in federal funding for research grants and financial student aid.[6] Recent Florida legislation has approved education funding for the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year, with $1.8 billion allocated for the Florida College System and $3.9 billion for the State University System.[7] It is unclear how these different funding sources will affect academic libraries. Universities will likely have to scramble to cover expenses that were cut from federal funding with state funding. The increases to library budgets reported in the 2022 Ithaka S+R survey may not continue, and the decreases, primarily affecting master's-granting institutions, may continue to worsen in the current funding crisis.

Rising Costs of Academic Resources and Technology

Budgets are frozen or decreasing in most academic libraries, but the costs of materials, especially subscription services, continue to increase. According to the 2023 State of U.S. Academic Libraries Report, the average percentage of the budget allocated to subscription services is 35 percent.[8] The average amount spent on one-time purchases for materials, such as books, is 8 percent. Romaine et al. examined 65 years of serial inflation. They explained that the average increase in subscription services, such as those from EBSCO, is expected to rise 4 to 5 percent for the 2025-2026 academic year.[9] Coping with increasing costs often means attempting to unbundle or cancel subscription services. Unbundling involves analyzing large subscription packages to create new contracts with subscription providers for only the necessary databases.[10] Although they do not provide an exact number of cancellations, SPARC has a cancellation tracking webpage that exhibits a substantial number of universities cancelling or unbundling.[11]

Building a case for support

Academic libraries continue to struggle to gain recognition for their value, despite numerous studies linking them to improved student performance. A recent study by Jung and Choi notes a correlation between academic library spending and student graduation rates.[12] Another important discovery finds that there is a "statistically significant association between academic library spending and graduation rates for Black students, even after considering the full range of other characteristics and effects" (p.1). The authors conclude that budget cuts to academic libraries may have an impact on the success of minority students. A study by O'Kelly et al. finds a positive correlation between library instruction and student retention rates.[13] A similar study by Rowe et al. finds a positive correlation between library instruction and GPA, pass/fail rates, and retention.[14] Researchers Scoulas and De Groote note a positive correlation between the use of library resources, such as articles from databases, and students' GPAs in a 2018 study.[15] In their subsequent study, they find a positive relationship between using library space and academic success as defined by the students they interviewed. A study by Mullins and Boyd-Byrnes finds a higher student success rate in information literacy instruction modules taught by librarians compared to those taught by faculty.[16] Academic libraries and librarians must continue to research their impact on student success and actively promote their findings to administrators making financial decisions.

Donor Identification and Cultivation

Budget cuts and a lack of support have led academic libraries to seek donations. The first step is to identify potential donors, including alumni, faculty and staff, community members, corporate partners, and foundations that support the university or have been created specifically to support the library. Griffith and Kealty theorize that students who are involved in the library as students will become alumni who are more likely to donate to the library.[17] Therefore, budget cuts that affect outreach and student programs may harm future connections with alumni. An article by Monnier and Kelly recommends reaching out to alumni with programs and events, creating relationships rather than immediately asking for money.[18] Cultivating relationships with potential donors, developing special programs, and organizing events require time that library deans or directors might lack.

6. Attridge and Johnson, 2025
7. Executive Office of the Governor Ron DeSantis, 2025
8. Goek, 2023
9. Romaine et al., 2025
10. Ivanov et al., 2020
11. SPARC, 2025
12. Jung Choi, 2023
13. O'Kelly et al., 2023
14. Rowe et al., 2021
15. Scoulas and De Groote, 2022
16. Mullins and Boyd-Byrnes, 2024
17. Griffith and Kealty, 2018
18. Monnier and Kelly, 2022

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Organizational and Staffing Considerations

Many libraries employ staff or librarians whose role is to manage marketing, outreach, or fundraising. A study by Dilworth and Heyns reported that 74 percent of the respondents to their survey had at least one person in a role dedicated to fundraising.[19] According to the Ithaka S+R survey in 2020, almost all library directors had to cut staffing.[20] About 75 percent of doctoral-granting universities experienced a reduction in staffing; those numbers are reflected in about 50 percent of master's-granting universities, and about 40 percent of baccalaureate universities. Librarians and staff were decreased through several different ways, including hiring freezes, not filling open positions, and eliminating those currently employed. Librarians or staff in finance or business, student success, engagement or outreach, development, or fundraising positions were furloughed or experienced reduced hours at about 20 percent of universities and eliminated at about 10 percent. The 2022 Ithaka S+R survey found that decreases in staffing were still occurring at 22 percent of Baccalaureate universities, 35 percent at master's universities, and 19 percent at doctoral universities.[21] Reduced staffing for roles responsible for relationship building, event planning, and collaboration with university fundraising foundations also diminishes the capacity to raise funds.

Working with University Development or Alumni Departments

Due to concerns about donor fatigue, universities often regulate the frequency and identity of contacts with potential donors, such as alumni. A study by Dilworth and Heyns found that 71 percent of library deans or directors were required to ask permission to contact alumni.[22] Another finding from the survey was that alumni donations accounted for almost 35 percent of total donations. In comparison, non-alumni donations comprised 28 percent, faculty and staff donations were around 15 percent, and donations from foundations were approximately 15 percent. Restricted access to alumni and limited time during annual giving campaigns have an adverse effect on library fundraising.

Role of "Friends of the Library"

"Friends of the Library" and other groups focused on supporting the library, as volunteers can assist with fundraising efforts. A study conducted by Dilworth and Heyns reported that 29 percent of the survey respondents had a friend group, but only 15 percent reported it was active.[23] One of the advantages of having a friend group or advisory board is involving members in fundraising activities. Collaborating with these groups is essential. Involving the library dean, director, or a staff member helps manage communication with university development offices and library personnel.[24] Three objectives for library support groups have been identified as fundraising, advocacy for the library, and providing guidance.[25] Friend or advisory groups can make connections within their communities and extend the reach of fundraising efforts.[26] Time and patience are recommended for libraries working with existing groups or trying to establish new ones. Cuts in staffing may hinder the operations of current library support groups or the energy and effort required to establish a new one.

Fundraising Strategies and Campaigns

There are many fundraising strategies academic libraries may employ: annual giving programs, major gift solicitation, capital campaigns for renovations and new buildings, endowment building for collections and services, crowdfunding and online fundraising platforms, and grant writing for federal and state funding.[27] According to Giving USA's 2024 report, individual giving accounts for approximately 66 percent, while corporate giving accounts for about 7 percent.[28] There are advantages and disadvantages to all fundraising strategies, and each should be considered carefully by library deans or directors. For libraries with reduced staffing and a lack of a designated person in charge of fundraising, online donations may provide an easy way to raise funds.

19. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
20. Frederick and Wolff-Eisenberg, 2020
21. Hulbert, 2022
22. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
23. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
24. Dilworth, et al., 2016
25. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
26. Rust and Stringfellow, 2018
27. Dilworth, et al., 2016

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Increase in Online Giving

Online giving increased by 21 percent in 2020 and has continued to grow, with a 9 percent increase in 2021, followed by no growth in 2022 and 2023, and finally an increase of 2 percent in 2024.[29] Blackbaud Institute also reports a 1.7 percent increase in online giving to higher education in 2024. According to Double the Donation, in 2023, 63 percent of donors to non-profit organizations preferred giving online with a credit or debit card, and 75 percent of these donations were made from desktop devices.[30] According to Give Campus, a company that provides online donation programs for colleges and universities, for the first time in 2024, more transactions occurred using mobile devices (42 percent) than using desktop/laptop computers (39 percent).[31] Give Campus also reports that alumni contribute the highest number of gifts, the highest number of individual donors, and the highest amount of money.

Online Giving Website and Link Design

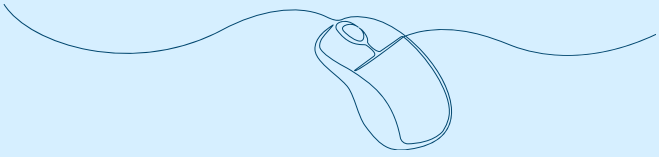
Although mobile device usage for donations is increasing, desktop computers continue to be the primary means of giving. Therefore, website design and button or link design for giving are crucial factors to consider. Several recent studies have highlighted the importance of website design in influencing online donation intentions. Hou et al. found that factors related to online donation intentions included trust in the online donation system, peer influence, and positive feelings about helping.[32] Kwak et al. discovers a connection between the consistency of the website design and the appeal of human images, which in turn affected donation intentions.[33] Consistency in website design means that consumers expect navigation and presentation to be understandable and similar over time, making it easier to find information with repeat visits. A study by Lin and Hsiung finds that donors value quick and easy methods for donating.[34] Websites that present information about donating in an easy-to-understand manner, with fewer steps to complete donations, reiterate the importance of the convenience factor in online giving. Trust in the organization is the most important factor in online giving according to Küchler et al.[35] With carefully designed mobile-friendly websites and links, online donations can be a convenient method for donors to connect with academic libraries.

Research Questions

- How many academic libraries in Florida offer an online donation option on their library website?
- How many academic libraries in Florida have “Friends of the Library” type groups?

Methodology

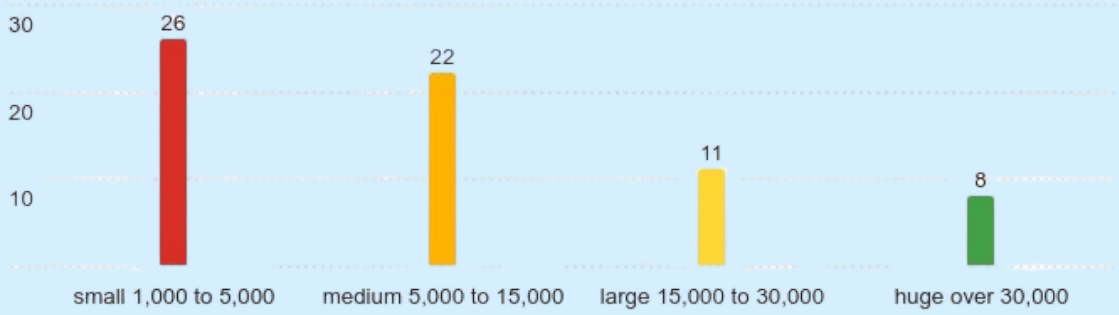
A list of 72 colleges and universities in Florida that offer four-year programs and have an enrollment of at least 1,000 students was obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics’ College Navigator.[36] Three for-profit universities were excluded from the study because the researcher was unable to access the websites of those libraries. Two universities were excluded from the study because, although NCES had listed them under slightly different names, they shared the same library and university websites. A total of 67 university and library websites were examined, comprising 38 public and 29 private institutions. The size of the university was determined using the total student population reported by NCES, which included undergraduate, graduate, and online students. There are 26 small universities with a student population of 1,000 to 5,000; 22 medium universities with a student population of 5,000 to 15,000; 11 large universities with a student population of 15,000 to 30,000; and eight huge universities with a student population of more than 30,000. The Carnegie classification of size was adjusted because there are a variety of residential characteristics within four-year institutions in Florida (See Table 1).



28. Giving USA, 2025
29. Blackbaud Institute, 2025
30. “Nonprofit Fundraising Statistics to Boost Results in 2025,” 2025
31. Give Campus, 2025
32. Hou et al., 2021
33. Kwak et al., 2023
34. Lin and Hsiung, 2024
35. Küchler et al., 2020
36. National Center for Education Statistics, 2025

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Table 1: Size of Four-Year Colleges and Universities in Florida



Note: N=67

This study is empirical, non-experimental research because it is based on observing and describing existing links and pages on the university and library websites at the time of the study in July 2025. IRB approval was not required for this study as no human subjects were involved. Quantitative data was analyzed for the mean, total counts, and percentages of responses. Data is publicly available at these two links: Academic Libraries in Florida Online Donation Links, Universities in Florida Online Donation Links

Data was collected for the first part of the study using a private Qualtrics survey, which was used to compile and analyze data. The first part of the study collected data on the following questions:

1. Was there a link on the library website for completing an online donation?
2. If yes, where was the link located?
3. Was there a “Friends of the Library” or another group that helped with library fundraising?
4. Was there anything else on the library web pages that indicated fundraising of some kind?
5. Was there an online donation option on the college or university’s website?
6. If yes, was there an option to donate to the library?

The researcher examined library homepages and further investigated main menu options to locate links related to giving opportunities, “Friends of the Library” or similar groups, and fundraisers. The researcher did not examine current or past news or event pages. The scope of this investigation did not include social media. If there were more than one library, the researcher examined the main library or an interdisciplinary library, and did not examine specialty library website pages, such as those for music, law, architecture, special collections, or archives. Research extended to gather more information about online donation links available on university homepages, because many libraries utilized the same online donation system. Data was collected for the second part of the study using an Excel spreadsheet. The researcher examined the location, visibility, and labeling of “donate” or “give” links on university homepages.

Results

Academic Library Online Donations

Online donation links are available on 22 percent (15) of the library websites. The link to give or donate is immediately visible on the library homepage for nine institutions. The other six are located by looking in the main menu under the menu item “About.” The location of the link to give or support is positioned at the top of the page, in the main menu, or above the main menu for 80 percent of the links. The most common labels are “give,” or “giving,” or something similar, such as “give to the library,” “give now,” and “giving opportunities.” Symbols, icons, or graphics are used in place of or in addition to labels, such as a gift (picture of a box with a bow), a heart in an open hand, or simply a heart for six links. (See Table 2).

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Table 2: Online Donation Link Locations, Labels, and Graphics

Online Donation Link Locations N=15			
Page Top Main Menu	Above Main Menu	Left Side Main Menu	Page Bottom
8	4	2	1
Online Donation Link Labels N=15			
Give/Giving	Support		
11	4		
Online Donation Link Graphics N=5			
Gift	Heart in Hand	Heart	
3	2	1	

Huge universities with a total enrollment of more than 30,000 students were more likely to have an online donation option at 75%, which was six out of eight. Thirty-six percent of large universities, 14% of medium universities, and 11% of small universities offered an online donation option. 76% (or 52) of the library websites did not include any links to facilitate online donations (See Table 3).

Table 3: Online Donation Link Availability by School Size

	All Universities	small 1,000 to 5,000	medium 5,000 to 15,000	large 15,000 to 30,000	huge over 30,000
	67	26	22	11	8
No	51	23	19.0	7	2
	76%	89%	86%	64%	25%
Yes	16	3	3	4	6
	24%	11%	14%	36%	75%

The number of library websites featuring information about “Friends of the Library” or similar groups was 13% (9); five were public and four were private institutions. Similar groups featured were “Circle of Friends,” “Library Advancement Board,” and “Library Associate Membership.” Huge and large universities were more likely to have support groups, with 37% of the huge and 36% of the large institutions reporting such a presence. One medium and one small institution had support groups for their libraries (See Table 4).

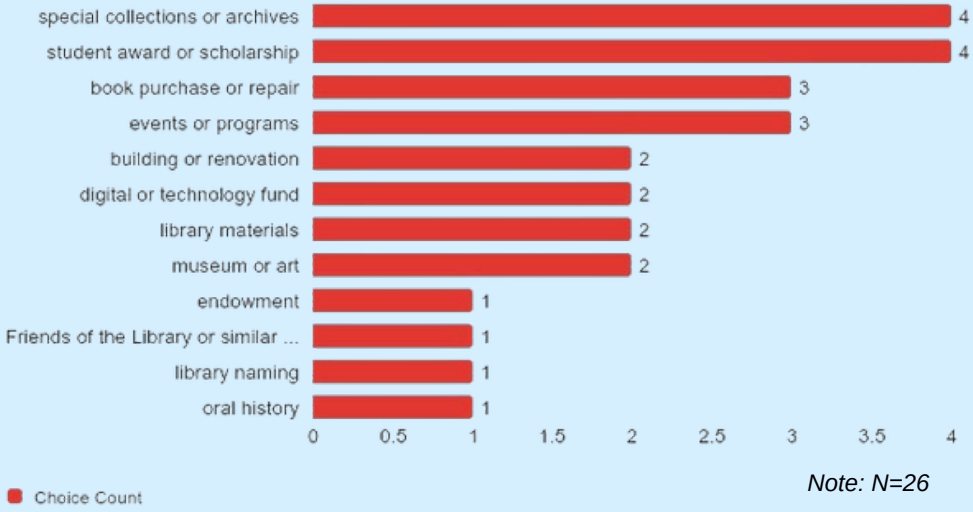
Table 4: Friends of the Library and Other Support Groups by Size of the University

	All Universities	small 1,000 to 5,000	medium 5,000 to 15,000	large 15,000 to 30,000	huge over 30,000
	67	26	22	11	8
No	58	25	21	7	5
	87%	96%	96%	64%	63%
Friends of the Library	6	0	1	3	2
	9%	0%	4%	27%	25%
Other	3	1.0	0	1	1
	4%	4%	0%	9%	12%

The number of library websites that included information about donating to specific projects or programs was 15% (10). Information was located on separate pages within library websites and accessed after selecting a link labeled “Give, Support, or Donate.” In some cases, the link was in the main menu labeled “About.” Online donation systems typically offer a variety of options through a drop-down menu within the donation system. Because there were often several options per library, the number of options does not equal ten. Donating to a student research award or scholarship was an option for four libraries. Other options for donating included purchasing library materials, supporting events or programs, or building and renovation funds (See Table 5).

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Table 5: Giving Opportunities in Academic Libraries

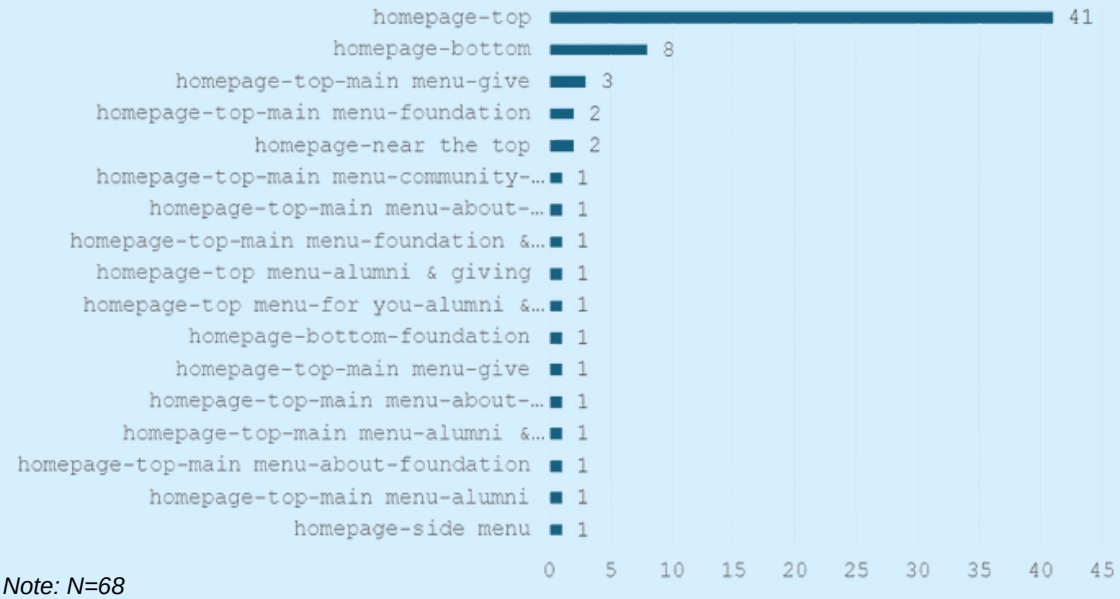


Note: N=26

University Online Donations

Ninety percent (61) of college and university websites had an online donation option. Seventy-nine percent (48) of the links to donate were immediately and easily visible on the college or university's homepage. Most of the links, 41, were located at or near the top of the website, while nine were positioned at the bottom. Fifteen links were visible after selecting different options in the main menu. Some colleges and universities had links located in two different places, which is why the location count differs from the link count (See Table 6). The most prevalent label for links leading to online donations was "Give." Other common labels were "Foundation," "Giving," "Give Now," "Give to," and "Donate." Interestingly, one website featured the symbol for money combined with a heart without any words (See Table 7).

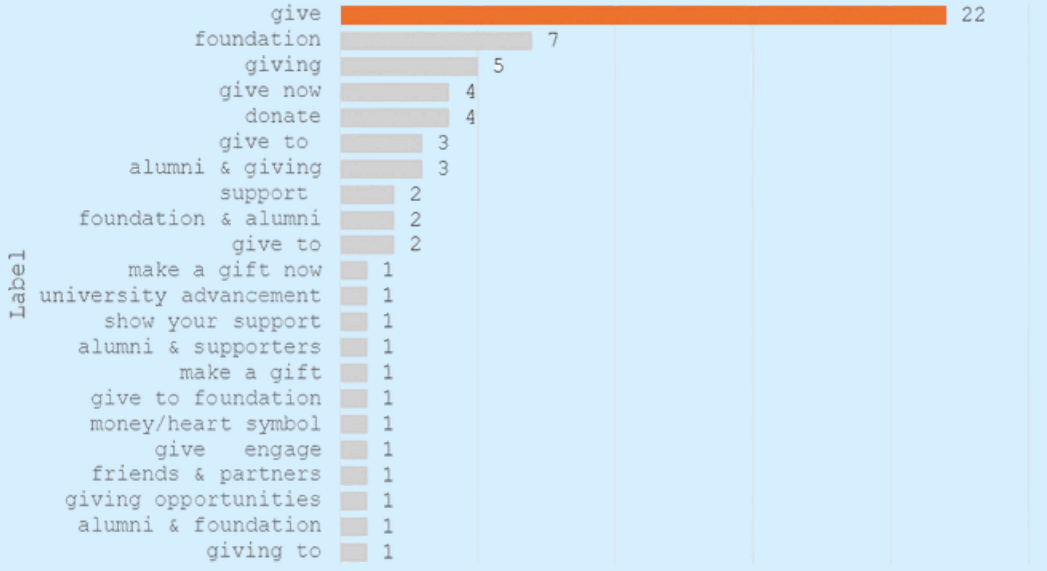
Table 6: University Online Donate Link Location



Note: N=68

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Table 7: University Online Donation Link Labels



Note: N=66

Out of the 61 colleges with links to online donations, 20 percent (13) have a straightforward method for donating to the library. Almost half (31) have a way to designate or specify an option not listed through a drop-down menu by selecting “Other” and entering a text response. It is unclear if someone specified “Library” that the donation would go to the library or into a general fund. Twenty-eight percent of the online donation systems do not include the library as an option, and there is no way to specify it by entering text.

Discussion

Considering the prevalence and convenience of online donations for non-profits, as well as the results of this study, which shows that 90 percent of four-year universities utilize online donation systems, academic libraries are falling behind in taking advantage of an easy way to raise funds year-round. An examination of giving in higher education conducted by Shaker and Borden in 2018 showed that giving to academic libraries has declined over the past 30 years (1988 to 2018).[37] Donations to support libraries decreased from $105.2 million to $76.4 million over a ten-year period (2008-2018). Which means that as prices for library materials and operations have increased, the amount of support they have received through fundraising has dropped. The most important finding from this study is that academic libraries need to work harder to garner the attention of donors amongst a sea of options. Connecting to the online donation system already used by 90 percent of universities is one way to increase fundraising. Therefore, it is recommended that library deans or directors become “the squeaky wheel that needs to be greased” by working harder to collaborate with university development teams and foundations. Librarians and library staff can also advocate for library funding by highlighting the impact libraries have on student performance and retention.

Friends of the Library or other advisory groups can be a powerful ally in fundraising.[38] The results of this study show that only nine libraries have these types of groups. Although it is unclear whether they are involved in fundraising, these types of groups can help connect the library with individual donors and community organizations. Alumni and non-alumni individuals donate the most to libraries compared to organizations and corporations.[39] It is recommended that library deans and directors establish a Friends or advisory group if they don’t already have one.[40] As this study shows, large universities are more likely to have Friends-type groups, possibly because they have enough librarians or staff to work with them. Small to medium-sized universities may be working with reduced staff or librarians may already be doing many different jobs. The payoff seems to be worth the effort of assigning someone to work with or develop a Friends or advisory group, if possible.

37. Shaker and Borden, 2020
38. Dilworth, et al., 2016
39. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
40. Rust and Stringfellow, 2018

ONLINE DONATIONS AND SUPPORT GROUPS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARY WEBSITES IN FLORIDA

Dilworth and Heyns surveyed librarians and library staff from organizations focused on fundraising in academic libraries, including the Academic Library Advancement and Development Network, and the Development Officers of Research and Academic Libraries.[41] Survey results indicate that libraries tend to focus their efforts on obtaining funds for unspecified needs, such as programs and events. Dilworth and Heyns theorize that the lack of a specific urgent need meant that donors might be uninterested. The other top fundraising objectives for academic libraries are for building or renovation projects and library materials. The results of this study show that only ten libraries feature information on fundraising for specific projects, programs, events, student scholarships, or awards. It is recommended that libraries enhance their fundraising efforts by highlighting specific programs, events, scholarships, or awards, and explaining how they positively impact student learning and retention. Gone are the days when a simple appeal for giving to the library without a specific reason could be made. While it may seem simple to include a link to an online donation system that accepts credit cards, donors will be more engaged and willing to give when they have specific, compelling reasons.

Limitations

This study was conducted during two consecutive days in July to ensure that observations of different websites were as fair as possible, since they might be updated or changed over time. The researcher did not examine social media posts or past news events to determine all possible fundraising efforts. It is conceivable that July might be a time of lower activity for universities. One method of fundraising is through a limited-time annual giving campaign, such as a “Giving Day” or “Giving Tuesday,” which typically occurs on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Academic libraries may be included in these kinds of special donation events, which were not observable during the time of this study.

Future Research

The most recent studies on this topic were published in 2020, so newer data are needed. This study does not determine the effectiveness of online donation options. Further research is required to determine whether libraries raise more money after setting up online donations as an option. This study does not assess the effectiveness of Friends of the Library and other library advisory groups on fundraising. A study could be conducted to estimate the amount of money attributable to the involvement of these types of groups in fundraising. Website design and mobile-friendly website design are other potential areas of further research. The amount of funds raised, in relation to the location of the online donation link, could be further explored. The power of images, such as human images versus graphics, like hearts and gifts, could be an interesting area of study related to website design. The future of website design may include virtual reality or 3D images.[42] Avatars with realistic interactions powered by artificial intelligence are being used in customer service and have been shown to impact online donations.[43] The future of online giving may be affected by wearable technology, such as smartwatches or Apple or Google glasses.[44] There are many ways the study of fundraising in academic libraries could be expanded.

Implications

The implications of this study extend beyond individual institutions to the broader academic library community. As libraries continue to face financial pressures while continuing vital roles in student retention and academic success, the failure to capitalize on established online giving preferences represents both a strategic oversight and a missed opportunity for sustainable funding. The convenience and familiarity of online donation systems aligns perfectly with libraries' need for accessible, year-round fundraising mechanisms.

Conclusion

Looking forward, academic libraries must recognize that effective fundraising requires dedicated resources and strategic planning. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that while academic libraries face significant funding challenges, practical solutions exist within current institutional frameworks. By leveraging existing university online donation systems, developing targeted appeals, and cultivating community support through advisory groups, academic libraries can better position themselves to secure the resources necessary to maintain and enhance their critical educational mission.

41. Dilworth and Heyns, 2020
42. Kristofferson et al., 2022
43. Huang et al., 2024
44. Elgan, 2025

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ARE PUBLIC ATTITUDES CHANGING?

Trends in Public Opinion Regarding Access to Sexual Content in Schools and Libraries

Robin G. Shader

Director of the Northwest Regional Library System, serving Bay, Gulf, and Liberty counties, FL, and doctoral student in the Public Administration program at Valdosta State University, GA.

Access to certain subject matter in public schools and libraries has recently become a more hotly debated issue. Between 2021 and 2023, 16 Republican-led states have used state legislation, executive orders by governors, or actions by state boards of education to limit discussions of sensitive or controversial topics in schools, specifically critical race theory and LGBTQ issues.[1] Florida is one of the states where new laws have mandated changes to how teachers teach, what they can discuss with students, and which books students can access in schools. The Parental Rights in Education Act (2022), often referred to as "The Don't Say Gay Bill," and the 2023 expansion are two examples of Florida laws aimed at increasing parents' rights to control the care and upbringing, including the education, of their children. While the changes mandated by these Florida laws have, arguably, increased information sharing between school staff and parents, and transparency related to the books and subject matter available to children in schools, they also have unintended consequences that may violate the constitutional rights of children and parents, and result in harm to vulnerable students.

Threats Against Schools, Librarians, and Teachers

Reaction to the availability of divisive content in school libraries has included extreme and hostile behavior. Louisiana School Librarian Amanda Jones received a death threat after she spoke publicly in support of the importance of providing a diverse collection of reading material to students. Other librarians have admitted that they no longer feel safe in their jobs.[2] In 2023, after a post from the "Libs of TikTok" social media account claiming an Iowa middle school had a book that "teaches kids about gay sex," a bomb threat was called in to the school.[3] Teachers are also losing their jobs over violations of these new laws and policies. For example, Melissa Calhoun, a teacher in Brevard County, Florida lost her job after using a student's preferred name without parental permission.[4] During the June 4, 2025 Florida State Board of Education meeting, a board member was incredulous that books with sexual content had ever made it onto library shelves and asked Superintendent Ayers of Hillsborough County schools, "Have you considered firing all your media specialists and starting from scratch?"[5] The threat of termination, criminal prosecution, or violence for allowing "pornography" in schools will likely have a long-lasting effect on which materials are removed or selected for school collections. Is this really what the public wants?

What Do Americans Think Today About What Children Should Learn in School?

Despite the removal of content deemed controversial in schools, polls of Americans indicate that the majority do not support such changes. A 2022 poll of 1,030 people conducted by the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that only 12 percent of respondents favored "Prohibiting books about divisive topics being taught in schools," and only 21 percent favored "Prohibiting teachers from teaching about sex and sexuality in schools."[6]

ARE PUBLIC ATTITUDES CHANGING?

The Understanding America Study (UAS), conducted by the University of Southern California, surveyed 3,751 Americans about what should be taught in schools. The UAS shows overwhelming bipartisan support for controversial subject discussion at the high school level, and significant support for many controversial topics at the elementary level.[7] Additionally, the survey revealed that most Americans do not know what is being taught in schools; they do not know very much (if anything) about critical race theory, and those who have objections to certain subjects being taught at the elementary level indicated that they do not believe those topics are actually taught.[8] The UAS found that while Democrats have more support for students learning about controversial issues in school generally, there is agreement by the majority of both Democrats and Republicans that high school students should be taught and have access to read books on controversial topics, but there should be limits on assigned and leisure reading of some controversial topics in elementary school.[9]

The Knight Foundation's Americans' Views on Book Restriction in U.S. Public Schools 2024 surveyed 4,500 adults in February and March 2024, and found that two-thirds of Americans surveyed are opposed to the restriction of books in public schools, and 78 percent of adults surveyed, and 88 percent of public school parents, are confident that school staff are selecting appropriate books.[10]

Trends in American Attitudes About LGBTQ+ Subjects Generally and in Libraries

Those surveys provide a snapshot of American attitudes today, but do not explain trends in public opinion. Are attitudes shifting? The General Social Survey (GSS) is a project of NORC at the University of Chicago, and funded by the National Science Foundation.[11] The GSS has been surveying Americans about societal issues since 1972, and GSS data has been used in numerous studies researching attitudes about issues listed as controversial. For example, data from the GSS between 1988 and 2010 was used to track changes in opinion about whether homosexuals should have the right to marry. Results indicated that public opinion became more supportive of same-sex marriage over time due to societal change.[12]

Another study examined GSS data about attitudes about homosexual materials in public libraries between 1973 and 2006, and concluded that the public had become less conservative in their views, with most believing gay-themed books should remain in public libraries, even if the respondents themselves felt homosexuality was wrong.[13] Similar to the study on gay marriage attitudes, the study of gay-themed library books found that acceptance was due to societal change. Based on GSS data, in 2006, only 25 percent of American adults over the age of 18 felt gay-themed books should be removed from public libraries.[14] In a 2010 study, the researcher confirmed that attitudes about having books in the library with positive portrayals of homosexuals had become more acceptable.[15]

To examine more recent attitudes about sexual content and LGBTQ+ themes in schools, GSS survey response trends from two questions were analyzed:

1. Should books about homosexuals be removed from public libraries?
2. Would you be for or against sex education in the public schools?

Books About Homosexuals in Public Libraries

The GSS asks respondents whether a book about homosexuals, written by a homosexual, should be removed from a public library. The data was cleaned to remove non-responses. Fig. 1 displays results from each survey year between 2012 and 2021, and shows that the percentage of people who believe such a book should be removed is steadily decreasing.[16] This question did not appear in the surveys conducted in 2022 and 2024.

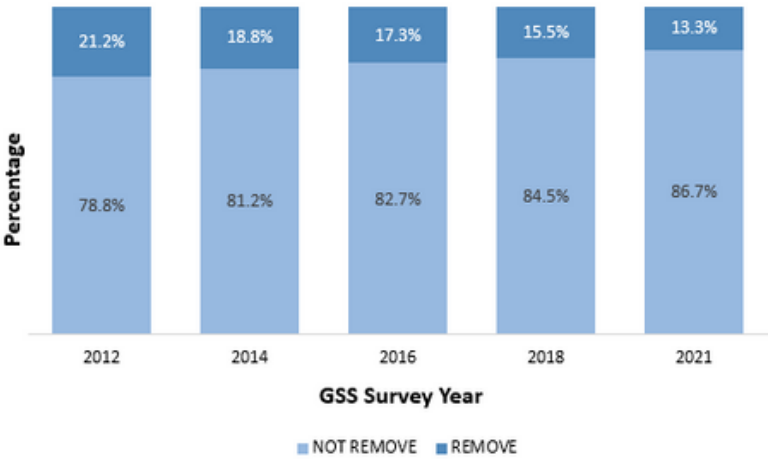

Fig. 1. Should a book about Homosexuality be Removed from the Public Library? Response Percentages, General Social Survey, 2012-2021.

ARE PUBLIC ATTITUDES CHANGING?

Support for Teaching Sex Education in Public Schools

The GSS asked: "Would you be for or against sex education in the public schools?" This question has been included in the GSS every year it was offered since 1974, so the results of 28 surveys are available for study.[17] Respondents who did not answer the question were removed from the analysis. Between the period 1974 and 2024, the highest disapproval percentage was 21 percent in both 1975 and 1977. Fig. 2 shows the results between 2012 and 2024. While there does appear to be a slight decline in support and a slight increase in opposition over this period, an overwhelming majority of survey respondents support teaching sex education in schools. In 2024, 87.1 percent of Americans supported teaching sex education, while only 12.9 percent opposed.

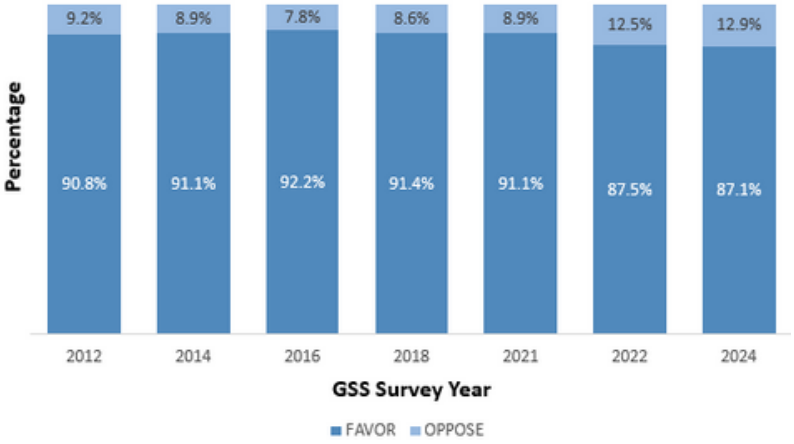

Fig. 2. Do You Favor or Oppose Sex Education in Schools? Response Percentages: General Social Survey, 2012 – 2024.

Since much of the legislation restricting school curriculum has been advanced in Republican-led states, an analysis of respondents' political party affiliation was conducted to determine if the increased opposition to sex education in schools varies by party. Data from respondents who did not identify a political party were removed. Fig. 3 shows the breakdown of respondents who oppose teaching sex education in school in the four surveys conducted from 2018 to 2024. Respondents who self-identified as Democrat or Democrat-leaning Independent were grouped into the Democrat group, and self-identified Republican or Republican-leaning Independents were combined into the Republican group. Fig. 3 shows that Democrats are the least opposed and Republicans are the group with the greatest opposition.

In 2024, 22.3 percent of respondents who self-identified as either Republican or Republican-leaning Independents (163 people) were opposed to sex education in school, and 76.7 percent (569 people) within that same political affiliation were in favor.

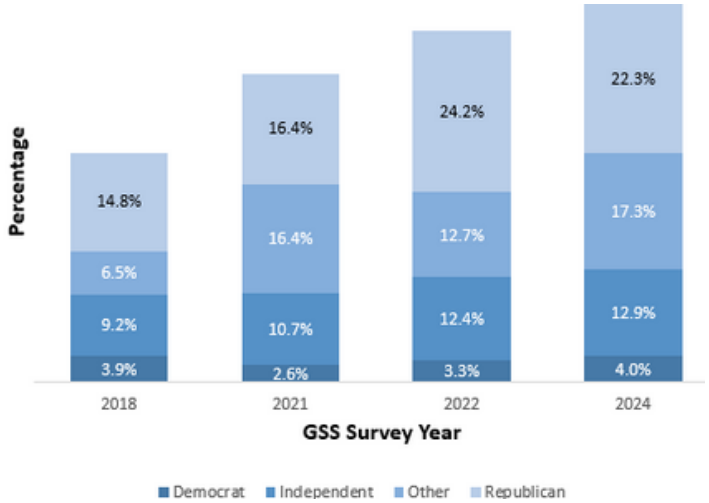

Fig. 3. Do You Favor or Oppose Sex Education in Schools? Percentage of Respondents Who Oppose by Political Affiliation: General Social Survey, 2018 – 2024.

Values and Politics

The Parental Rights in Education Act (2022) and related legislation have the stated goal of supporting parents' rights to control the education of their children, but the result is that only some parents are controlling what information all students can access. There are strong views for and against allowing controversial materials in schools and libraries, which is why school board meetings are often contentious. Research shows that when individuals have morally convicted attitudes about specific topics, it can encourage them to become more politically engaged and can also spark negative emotions, creating hostile feelings toward those who support the opposing viewpoint.[18] Based on research by Clifford et al., rhetoric that negatively frames the existence of books about sexuality or gender identity in schools will be most persuasive in people who already support that point of view.[19] A recent Hillsborough County school board meeting provided a glimpse of the passionate opinions on both sides of the issue. The lengthy public comment period included multiple calls to remove "inappropriate," "sexually explicit," and "pornographic" materials from schools. As one commenter stated, "This is not a debate about censorship or freedom of expression. This is about protecting minors from content that is not only harmful, but also explicitly prohibited by state law."[20]

ARE PUBLIC ATTITUDES CHANGING?

The next speaker expressed concern about the transparency of the book removal process after hundreds of books were removed without following the existing review process. “As a parent, I find this concerning. Public school parents ought to be able to see what is being removed and to have a say as to whether or not these books are inappropriate for our own children.”[21]

Florida school districts are under pressure to remove books that political appointees consider pornographic. During their June 4, 2025, meeting, Florida State Board of Education members were clear that criminal charges should be brought against school district board members or employees if they do not remove materials that violate state statute. It is within this contentious political and cultural environment that librarians need to try to adequately meet the needs of students while following laws and procedures that might be contrary to professional ethics and which violate individual rights granted by the U.S. Constitution.

Conclusion

This article examines public opinion and finds that, despite increased rhetoric and debate on the availability of divisive content in schools, the majority of Americans support access to diverse instruction and materials in public schools. Research suggests that public policy is not based on public opinion but, rather, is influenced by organized interest groups.[22] In Florida and other states, successful advocacy efforts have changed what and how teachers teach and the books that students can access in public schools. Lawsuits have challenged the constitutionality of curriculum restrictions and book removals, and there have been successes. For example, in August 2025, the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida sided with plaintiffs on seven counts included in their lawsuit against Parental Rights in Education (HB 1069), claiming “The state’s prohibition of material that ‘describes sexual conduct’ is overbroad and unconstitutional.”[23] An attorney for the Florida State Board of Education stated they would appeal the decision.[24]

Upholding professional standards and ethics in this politically polarized environment may be a challenge, but, according to recent polls and selected GSS trend data, the majority of Americans remain supportive of the freedom to read, learn, and consider all points of view.

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CHILDREN IN THE MUSEUM

Laura Clark Hunt
Assistant Professor, University of Southern Mississippi

Abstract
Developing comprehensive ways to measure impact becomes increasingly important when museum programming grows. Information from interviews with parents/caregivers of children attending archaeology museum programs reveals the impact of hands-on, age-appropriate activities for children. The interviews reveal that participation in archaeological learning influences how students perceive the past. Earlier research has focused on knowledge creation, but not on the creation of a sense of belonging and cultural identity through archaeology education, which helps establish the value of heritage resources. In the future, practitioners should prioritize intrinsic motivation in the discovery and instillation of respect for the past. To further this, future research is needed on best practices of fun and inclusive archaeology programs rooted in discovery that impact lifelong learning.

Introduction

In 2018, Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) Coordinating Center staff in Pensacola, Florida, implemented a pilot program called "Archaeology Story Time." The program was held in the Destination Archaeology Resource Center. This public program was created specifically for a previously underserved age group (children aged 4 to 8) that had been left out of previous programming. Registration for many of these programs filled up within 48 hours of opening. The program took place monthly in a museum that contained a lecture room with video capacity, lab, and museum space. The activity-based programs focus on archaeological techniques used for discovery, which are rooted in science. Interviews were conducted with participants from three programs to help understand why parents and caregivers, as well as children, attended these programs. Appendix B has pictures from the sorting activity. Programs like this program and other archaeology education programs for children have experienced significant growth over the past few decades, aiming to foster cultural heritage stewardship, promote historical thinking skills, and engage youth with the scientific process. [1] By doing this and providing quality archaeology education programs for children, we hope to fuel lifelong learning and an appreciation for our cultural heritage resources.[2]

Archaeology Education

Archaeology education programs for children aim to increase public understanding of archaeology, raise awareness of local heritage, and encourage preservation of the past.[3] To accomplish the goal of raising awareness and encouraging preservation, museums employ various approaches, including classroom lessons, museum programs, field trips to sites, the use of current and new technologies such as smartphone apps, hands-on experiential learning, and more. Other common approaches include archaeology fairs and community events that showcase local resources, the classroom use of actual archaeological data and artifacts, and student involvement in authentic research.[4] This hands-on approach to inquiry offers an engaging activity that emphasizes doing rather than simply sitting and listening. This can take the form of summer camps and other activities that allow children and their parents to engage in limited archaeological work.

1. Ellick, 2016
2. Clark and Thomin, 2022
3. Kowalczyk, 2016
4. Sgouros and Stirn, 2016

CHILDREN IN THE MUSEUM

Museum Education
Place-based education, which immerses students in the exploration of their local community through hands-on learning, is particularly well-suited for archaeology.[5] This type of learning allows students the opportunity to explore the world around them, especially archaeological sites, and learn what these sites have to offer through first-hand experience. It enables people of all ages, and especially children, to experience the joys of discovery, whether they be large or small. Engaging with local historical and archaeological resources helps students develop a stronger connection to places and an appreciation for stewardship.

Overview of Research Design
For this study, the researcher deployed qualitative collection methods. Data was analyzed for perceptions, motivations, and impacts experienced. Phone interviews were relatively inexpensive and allowed the researcher to collect data from one point in time from any location, which gave a deeper understanding of perceptions in their own words. The semi-structured nature of the interviews stems from the ability to compare questions for major themes. The research utilizes interviews to provide more information on the course through the students' eyes.

RQ1: What factors motivate parents/caregivers to bring their child/children to the program?
RQ2: What are parents' or caregivers' perceptions of the program?
RQ3: What impact did the program have from the perspective of the parents/caregivers?

Population
The location used for gathering data consisted of three different museum programs at the Destination Archaeology Museum in Pensacola, Florida. The region was along the western part of the Florida Panhandle. All interview participants lived within 20 miles of the museum location and were noted as the parents of the children they brought to the museum. All children were registered for the program in advance. At the end of the program, parents/caregivers were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview. Post-program interviews were conducted by phone and were collected over the following month.

Interview Findings
Three story-time programs were assessed at the Destination Archaeology Museum. A total of nine interviews were collected from the three programs. The programs averaged 14 children per program. The interviewees volunteered to participate in the survey, so they were contacted by phone to schedule an interview. Many of the interviews took place during the afternoon, between 2:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M. Nine participants volunteered to be interviewed. Major themes were mentioned four or more times in the interviews. Ancillary themes were comments that were not addressed in the structured questions. Ancillary themes appeared in the interviews that the researcher did not anticipate. The headings for the themes are as follows: benefits, favorite part of the program, program impact, program improvements, lessons learned, motivation for attending, and ancillary findings.

Interview Themes	Quotes
Program Elements	1. The story was just so well chosen. 2. Seeing the plantation and learning hands-on 3. It was interactive. It was a good span of time. 4. I liked that the group was small and manageable. 5. He's really good with the children. He keeps their attention.

K-12 Archaeology Story Time

5. Reetz, and Quackenbush, 2016

CHILDREN IN THE MUSEUM

Interview Themes	Quotes
Benefits	1. I think more knowledge; it was more information for my child. But I certainly enjoyed it. 2. It brought a lot of interest to my son with history and he didn't know anything about archaeology before. 3. They're just discovering, they're just having fun, and meanwhile they're learning. 4. I would say interacting with the kids and learning something new. I would say the content for sure. 5. The fact that it was an educational program that also provides us with some history of the area we live in. 6. My kids really enjoyed the part where they got to sift through the artifacts and find things. They learned a bit about what you guys do.
Program Impact	1. Well, he's been telling people about it and other kids. Telling them that he likes archaeology. 2. It definitely got him interested. I know he would like to read more about the things that he learned. There's a lot to be learned, history and things like that from archaeology. 3. It brought awareness to the Archaeology Institute. I had never been there; I didn't know there was a museum where I could take my daughter to. 4. She'll have a greater knowledge about the city she was born, and lived in.
Motivation	1. The history, archaeology aspect of it. 2. She loved learning about the Greeks, and the Egyptians. 3. I always try to find things around the community, especially things that are free or affordable and educational. 4. It was really kind of fun to come with my daughter, and learn, as well as some hands-on stuff for myself about the town that we live in. 5. I personally have an interest in archaeology. I thought it'd be something fun for the kids to do. 6. My kids, they like digging up stuff. They like science.
Favorite	1. Sorting through the artifacts. 2. He was making stone piles and pottery piles like bone piles, and he just was really getting into it and that's what made it the most fun activity for us, I think. And that it was hands-on. 3. I liked the story time because my girls like it, and the stories you guys picked were great choices. The next thing was the hands-on that you guys did was just amazing. Definitely when they were digging through the rocks and pulling out the artifacts, and um, pulling out the items.
Improvements	1. Sometimes these little guys can have a bit of trouble grappling with abstract things. 2. I would like to see y'all do more like this. More opportunity for more kids to be able to participate, and maybe things for the older kids as well. 3. We would just love to see it again. It'd be great to be able to do something once a month or especially during the summer.
Learned Lessons	1. He came away, um, with understanding the difference between archaeology, paleontology, and geology. 2. The words, archaeology and what that is, what it means, and the artifacts. 3. Conversations about clay is a form of earth and who would study that, a geologist or an archaeologist. 4. As an adult, I think you want to learn new things in life because now I'm not going to school anymore. 5. We learned about an artifact, a rock, and what's a fossil. Like all these little things, um, that you guys encountered to facilitate the learning process for us, and in order to learn about this area. To educate us and learn about what happened here in the past.
Ancillary Findings	Respondents reminisced about their own childhoods using metal detectors, etc. Children like to explore, dig, and collect things.

Practitioner Application

There is more substantive information about assessing historical programs for the public in history rather than archaeology. Of course, this is a needed research study. The methods applied to this study are rooted in program evaluation that has long been used for public programs, including library children's programming. The findings provide some focal points that museums and archaeology education programs can implement to help demonstrate the important work being accomplished. It is essential to note that the program was led by a responsive adult who adjusted the program components as needed to suit the children. None of the activities in the program would have been successful without a responsive adult who was vested in the experience each child had.

Motivations

The overall motivation for attendance at museum programming can directly impact the experience and learning of participants.[6] However, in this study, the elements of impact, benefit, and program elements were tied directly to the motivation. The knowledge about local history and the field of archaeology, along with hands-on applications, were found as themes. This creates a question of whether a natural interest in these elements already provided the needed motivation and, in turn, created the impact and benefit the parents/caregivers wanted within the program elements for their children. This information then helps program developers understand how to market these types of programs and the elements needed to create an ideal program for children.

Perceptions

Past research on the perceptions of museum visitors has yielded results that reveal improvements and expansions, facilitating relationships between interpretive content and visitor experiences.[7] The findings above correlate with the previous research on museum visitor motivations. The findings above clarify program elements that parents/caregivers desire for their children. A common theme in all the interviews was age-appropriate, hands-on activities for the children. Activities such as sorting lent themselves easily to the children's natural tendencies, allowing them to touch artifacts from the past. However, one of the parents referred to the sorting activity as "digging."

It is essential for museum professionals and archaeologists not to focus on language like this. Instead, the focus should be on the experience and how the child felt about cultural heritage after the program. This supports previous research that found motivation and learning in museums have different assessment criteria.[8] Feeding curiosity and fostering interest in cultural heritage should be priorities for all children's museum programs.

Learning

Helping children and parents understand basic concepts, such as what an artifact is, is still a great outcome for a program. A component of inclusivity is creating a sense of belonging, regardless of where people come from or their level of knowledge about the subject matter. However, prior knowledge can impact learning during the museum experience. Educational components in a program can directly relate to the learning that takes place within the program.[9] Creating opportunities for children to play, explore, and learn about things for which they have context, such as eating, is a great way to present a simple concept that inclusively demonstrates the relatability of diversity. Inclusivity in programming for children helps them feel like they are part of archaeologists' work. Ultimately, this sense of belonging and identity in cultural heritage will establish value for the past and hopefully grow into a desire to preserve cultural resources. The benefits the parents/caregivers note are not mutually exclusive from the learning process. The parents/caregivers gave the following as benefits: knowledge, historical information for my child, creating interest in history for my child, discovery and fun while learning, socialization, hands-on activity, the work of archaeology, and local history.

In the ancillary findings, historians and archaeologists see less-than-ideal behavior toward artifacts and cultural sites. Allowing children to learn about preserving the past and why this preservation is critical should be another underlying message at all archaeological programs for children. Additionally, presenters need to embrace that if you reach the child, you reach the parents with a message of preserving cultural heritage. This is evident in the quotes when parents/caregivers say they do not enjoy the fact that they are learning something with their child. Demonstrating to children how to interact with artifacts and elements from the past should also be an essential component in programs.

6. Gorman, 2008
7. Ballantyne, 2003
8. Gorman, 2008
9. Gorman, 2008

Impact

Yalowitz (2004) determined impact based on the behavior of the museum visitors after they experienced the exhibit.[10] This research primarily focused on changes in behaviors and beliefs.[11] Adelman, Falk, and James (2000) noted the initial impact of the museum experience was high, but the long-term effect was not noticed.[12] The impact that parents/caregivers provided was not mutually exclusive from program elements, learning, or benefits. The following is a list of the impact themes parents/caregivers provided: appreciation of archaeology, interest in learning about archaeology, awareness of the museum, and local history. Gorman (2008) provided evidence of the complexities when assessing learning in a museum. While assessing learning is essential, the long-term feelings about belonging and creating interest that will help fuel learning after the program is over may be of greater value than remembering dates and names.

Most research indicates that museums, archives, and libraries have a positive impact.[13] Studies have yet to establish a descriptive indicator for what impact looks like within the context of social impact that can be measured quantifiably. This makes it difficult to identify the impact for further investigation. Museums and archives notably lack hard evidence that can be utilized to identify impact via collection of systematic, generalizable data.[14] Museums, archives, and libraries need to establish set areas of potential social impact that demonstrate a causal link to long-term behavior change and learning.

Future Research

Several articles in this literature review emphasize the need for future research to understand the outcomes and effectiveness of archaeology education programs. More interdisciplinary research in archaeology education in museums is needed from a psychological and social science perspective. Specifically, museums need to provide best practices on what constitutes a quality environment for children and how it can impact lifelong learning. The research should complement current findings and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and impact of archaeology education programs within the context of joyful discovery and exploration.

Museums need to demonstrate that these stories have power and how that power can be applied in our daily lives. This sense of belonging and cultural identity helps create value for the community's natural cultural heritage resources, and ensures the sustainability and protection of the past. Understanding stakeholders' motivation for participation in cultural heritage programs (no matter the age) is imperative to program success.

Conclusion

Archaeological education programs promote awareness of the past through archaeological research activities. The program elements, motivation, impact, and learning that parents/caregivers perceived as necessary for their children are not mutually exclusive. While further research is needed, studies suggest that participation in archaeological learning influences how children perceive and engage with the past. Archaeology educators should expand high-quality programming to focus on the past through learning activities that are fun and interactive. Evaluation and best practices for inquiry-based programming approaches are crucial for improving the quality, inclusivity, and sustainability of museum archaeology programs for children.

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12. Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000.
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Appendix A

1. What impact do you feel your child experienced from attending this museum program?
2. What was your motivation for attending this program?
3. What are the benefits you received from attending this program?
4. What did your child learn from this museum program?
5. What improvements would you recommend for this program?
6. Do you believe the staff were responsive to your child?
7. What was your favorite part of the program?
8. What program elements did you like in this museum program?

TEACHING WITH WIKIPEDIA

BY KATHLEEN DE LA PEÑA MCCOOK

During 2013-2014 I developed a new course, "Wikipedia and Knowledge Management," and reorganized another course, "History of Libraries," with assignments to be submitted in Wikipedia. I decided that students could apply critical thinking skills to enhance articles in Wikipedia and at the same time work to increase the amount of information about libraries and librarianship.

Generative artificial intelligence and large language models which use Wikipedia as one of their datasets need transparency and information to ensure that the information ecosystem is up-to-date, evolving, and trustworthy.[1]

Students were extraordinarily creative as they went through Wikipedia tutorials and became proficient at editing. The outcome was that enrolled students are now creative contributors, skilled editors, and managers of content in Wikipedia– both librarians AND Wikipedians.[2]

In a 2024 article in Library Trends, I developed a rationale for librarianship to include facility in editing. I also argued that it is essential for librarians to contribute to the reliability of Wikipedia, and suggested that librarians work to overcome paywalls that create a barrier to more robust documentation.[3] This report looks at some aspects of teaching with Wikipedia at the University of South Florida, School of Information, focusing on the 2021-2025 school years.

Florida Libraries History at the University of South Florida

Before the internet, the School of Information faculty, library faculty, and LIS students compiled histories of Florida libraries by writing to public and academic librarians for their histories. This was done by U.S. mail. The result was the "Florida Library History Project," which is now part of the Floridiana Digital Commons at the University of South Florida Libraries.[4]

As Wikipedia became an established source of information.[5] I monitored articles in Wikipedia about libraries—especially those in Florida. From 2000-2010 I learned to edit Wikipedia and based on knowledge gained through the "Florida Library History Project," I contributed to many of the citations in Wikipedia. But, I was only one person. In my "History of Libraries" classes, I read many papers about Florida libraries by students and wondered if the students could also learn to edit Wikipedia, instead of submitting papers to me, thereby enhancing the online footprint of Florida's libraries.[6]

And so, we did. And we continue to do so.

Some students added a section or link to existing articles on topics like local Florida libraries in Wikipedia– some at the city or county level. It was surprising how many government pages on Wikipedia did not list local libraries as cultural resources or mention their history.

The following page is a list of Wikipedia articles that School of Information students edited from 2021-2025. Wikipedia editors are anonymous, but if your library has better documentation in Wikipedia, it is likely because a University of South Florida MLIS student has added the information. Many students continue to update the articles they worked on after graduation.

1. Decklemann, 2023
2. McCook, 2014
3. McCook, 2024
4. Florida Library History Project, 1998
5. Lih, 2009
6. Proffitt, 2018

TEACHING WITH WIKIPEDIA

Alvin Sherman Library (Nova Southeastern University and Broward County)
Altamonte Springs
Altamonte Springs City Library
Anton Brees Carillon Library in Lake Wales
Boca Raton Public Library
Brevard County Library System
Broward County Library
Bruton Public Library, Plant City
Cape Coral
Clearwater Public Library System
Clermont
Collier County Public Library (added to Collier County page)
Crestview
David S. Walker Library (private subscription library in Tallahassee)
Delray Beach Public Library
Destin
Dunedin Public Library
Edward Waters University
Ethel M. Gordon Oakland Park Library
Fernandina Beach
Flagler County Libraries
Florida Association for Media in Education (FAME)
Florida Bureau of Braille and Talking Books Library
Florida Library Association
Florida Media Quarterly
Florida State University
Fort Walton Beach Library
Gadsden County Public Library System
George A. Smathers Libraries
Gulfport Public Library
Hannibal Square Library (Winter Park)
Henry Flagler
Hudson Regional Library
Indian River City Library
Islamorada
Jacksonville Public Library
James Weldon Johnson Community Library (St. Petersburg)
John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art
John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Library
Lake County Library System
Lake Park
Lake Park Public Library
Lakeland Public Library
Lee County Library System
LeRoy Collins Leon County Public Library
Lighthouse Point
Lighthouse Point Library
Live Oak, Florida (added section for library)
Macdonald–Kelce Library (University of Tampa)
Maitland Public Library (added to Maitland page)
Manatee Public Library
Marion County Public Library System
Mary Esther Public Library
Miami-Dade Public Library System
Monroe County Library system
New Port Richey Library
New River Public Library Cooperative
Oakland Park
Ocala Carnegie Library
Okaloosa County
Orange County Library System
Orlando, Florida (added subheading section for “Public libraries”)
Palm Beach County Library System
Palm Harbor Library
Palatka Public Library
Pasco County Library Cooperative
Pinellas Public Library Cooperative (added to Pinellas County page)
Polk County Historical Museum
Port St. Lucie, Florida (added square footage to libraries)
Quincy Library
Safety Harbor
Sarasota County Library System
Seminole Community Library (added to Seminole page)
Seminole Tribe of Florida (added Seminole Tribal Library System)
Shalimar
Southeastern University (Florida)
St. Augustine Free Public Library
St. Johns County Public Library System
St. Lucie County Library System
St. Pete Beach
St. Petersburg Library System
Stetson University College of Law (Created a section on the Stetson law archives and provided an introduction)
Suwannee County
Suwannee River Regional Library (added to Suwannee County page)
Tampa–Hillsborough County Public Library System
Tarpon Springs
Tarpon Springs Public Library (added to Tarpon Springs page)
Temple Terrace Library
The Northwest Regional Library System (NWRLS)
Thomas Branigan Memorial Library ("Branigan")
Titusville, Florida (Indian River City Library)
University of South Florida (Special Collections)
University of Tampa (Macdonald–Kelce Library)
Walton-Defuniak Library
Washington County Public Library
Winter Park Public Library
Zephyrhills Public Library

This list only covers five years. University of South Florida, School of Information students have added over a thousand citations to Wikipedia about Florida libraries since 2010. As you read this, if you have any suggestions for additional citations in Wikipedia, I encourage you to reach out to me. My email is listed in the bio.

Further Wikipedia Studies: Case Study of the Discoverability of The Sandars and Lyell Lectures

I also teach courses in bibliography and rare books. In preparing for classes I found many important scholars of bibliography or book history are missing from Wikipedia. This happens because the topics may not interest those who write for Wikipedia.

I used *The Sandars and Lyell Lectures: A Checklist* to identify scholars of book history and bibliography.[7] Then I checked the *MLA International Bibliography* which uses contextual indexing and a faceted taxonomic access system for citations to both the Lyell and Sandars Lectures.[8] I retrieved fewer than forty citations that referenced either the Lyell or Sandars lectures.

Because I knew from reading the journal, *The Book Collector*, that these lectures had been covered in review essays I realized to identify more complete citations about these lectures I would need to review the archives of *The Book Collector* (which I knew from reading the journal) had covered these lectures in depth.[9, 10] When I did this, I was able to add 117 citations from *The Book Collector* to various articles in Wikipedia about the Sandars and Lyell lectures. I found, despite the rapid development of linked data, that without a human eye much was omitted.

I then added new essays and links in Wikipedia to amplify the importance of the Sandars and Lyell lectures to make connections to the scholarship of bibliography. I added citations to fifty-seven additional items of information to the Sandars and Lyell lecture pages including citations to some that had been published.

I chose these threads because the only frequent coverage of the Sandars and Lyell Lectures was in *The Book Collector*. Exploring far greater coverage in that journal compared to identification using digital indexes demonstrated that online resources are not yet comprehensive, especially for bibliographic topics.[11]

Conclusion

Wikipedia has superseded all prior online encyclopedia initiatives. Even WorldCat now recognizes the legitimacy of Wikipedia. WorldCat has integrated its citation tool through the OCLC Linked Data initiative so that Wikipedia editors can type in an ISBN and get back a Wikipedia-ready book citation.[12]

Journals cited in Wikipedia articles reach the largest general audiences. The citation impact of Wikipedia affects scholarship.[13] In addition, a 2022 study reported:

> *Thwarted by paywalls, not understanding the need to contextualize sources, and permeated by an ideology that sees the online world as containing all that is of value means that there is little or no incentive for users to explore original sources.[14]*

This is why future classes at the University of South Florida, School of Information, will focus on discoverability. Wikipedia Studies are an aspect of my classes that seek to provide useful information to the public about topics relating to libraries, especially libraries in Florida.

Kathleen de la Peña McCook is distinguished university professor of librarianship, School of Information, University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. She has taught at USF since 1993. She continually edits Wikipedia and on the day this article was submitted to the Florida Libraries Journal she has contributed 15,602 edits. She can be contacted at kmccook@usf.edu

7. Mckitterick, 1983
8. Modern Language Association of America, n.d.
9. Barker and British Library, 2003
10. Fleming, 2016
11. McCook, 2025
12. OCLC, 2024
13. Teplitskiy, 2017
14. Luyt, 2022

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FROM LOCAL INNOVATION TO SHARED PRACTICE: DISSEMINATING THE LGAS RUBRIC FOR LIBRARY GUIDE DESIGN

By Dr. Sarah Moukhliss, STEM Online Learning Librarian, University of North Florida
and Trina McCowan Adams, Director of Flagler College Library

SpringShare's tool, LibGuides, which helps in creating library guides, is popular for educating students, faculty, and staff about library resources, tools, and services, largely due to its ease of use. [1][2] For many libraries, LibGuides are the essential and primary tool for creating content about the library.[3] In 2021, Hennesy & Adams reported that of the 131 R1 Institutions that they evaluated for LibGuides, 95 percent hosted a public library guide platform to disseminate information.[4] As of September 2025, Springshare reports that 7,500 institutions across 106 countries utilize LibGuides platforms, with an estimated 250,000 librarian users creating them.[5]

Despite the prolific use of library guides, they can be problematic as design standards for pedagogically designing library guides are lacking.[6][7] In their recorded LOEX session (viewable on YouTube), Lechtenberg & Gold playfully present the challenges and potential to improve library guide quality and reinforce the many issues that library guide authors can create if they're not careful with thinking through a library guide's purpose and content.[8] Issues include content selection, layout, and alignment of guide objectives to the content of the guide.[9]

Bergstrom-Lynch argues that research on instructional design regarding library guides is rare and is only just starting to gain traction.[10] It is not surprising that, given the minimal literature published on library guides and instructional design principles, few librarians scrutinize library guides through the lens of pedagogists or instructional designers who advocate for student-centric learning materials.[11] Solutions to design problems are being proposed. This article describes a pedagogical tool developed based on instructional design principles and quality assurance, as outlined by me. I designed the tool based on library guide problems that I experienced and reinforced in the peer-reviewed literature. I named the pedagogical peer review tool that I developed the Library Guide Assessment Standards for Quality-Checked Review, or the LGAS rubric for short.[12][13] I created the LGAS rubric by remixing an Open Education Resource (OER) course development tool developed by the State University of New York (SUNY), called OSCQR, the SUNY Online Course Quality Review Rubric.[14]

The LGAS Backstory

Part of my job at the University of North Florida is to assist with curating Open Education Resource (OER) content for faculty who want to save their students money on expensive course textbooks.[15] In addition to traditional library one-shots and research consultations, I am tasked with evaluating online university courses through the lens of Quality Matters. Quality Matters is a proprietary company that created standards that all good online courses should have.[16] I was trained in Quality Matters, and I am a certified reviewer for the university.

1. Logan & Spence, 2022
2. Moukhliss & McCowan, 2024
3. Castro Gessner & Wilcox, 2015
4. Hennesy & Adams, 2021
5. Springshare, n. d.
6. Bergstrom-Lynch, 2019
7. Moukhliss & McCowan, 2024
8. Lechtenberg & Gold, 2022
9. Moukhliss & McCowan, 2024
10. Bergstrom-Lynch, 2019
11. Moukhliss & McCowan, 2024
12. Library Guide Assessment Standards for Quality-Checked Review, n. d.
13. Moukhliss & McCowan, 2024
14. OSCQR-SUNY, n.d.
15. What is OER Anyway, 2017
16. Hulen, 2022

FROM LOCAL INNOVATION TO SHARED PRACTICE

After reviewing several online courses through the lens of Quality Matters and enjoying the collaborative efforts of working with a peer review team to provide thoughtful, constructive yet courteous feedback, I wondered why there was not any similar system in place for teams of librarians to build, assess, and critique library guides based on their pedagogical value.

The perplexity of not having a quality assurance process with established standards led me to email the Quality Matters company. After receiving my email, the CEO and her team invited me to a one-hour Zoom session to hear my suggestions. To plan for the invite, I wanted to present a concrete tool to the team that represents a library guide tool with a peer review system. I understood that I should not use Quality Matters due to copyright concerns, and I began brainstorming similar tools with open licenses. After consulting with a Quality Matters colleague at UNF, I decided to remix the **State of New York Online Course Quality Review (SUNY OSCQR) rubric**, a course development tool that promoted best practices for course design. The open license allowed me to remix their tool to create the LGAS rubric. Because SUNY OSCQR is not a peer review tool, I added 32 annotations aligned with the 32 standards to my remixed rubric, thereby making it a peer review tool. The annotations clarify what the reviewer should look for as evidence-based on the standard before marking the standard as a pass or fail. During the meeting, I shared the current LGAS rubric with the team and created a crosswalk to the Quality Matters rubric to highlight the similarities between the two tools.

After making the LGAS rubric and speaking with Quality Matters, I decided to pursue a study. I invited a colleague and librarian, Trina McCowan Adams (former UNF Assessment Librarian and now Director of Libraries at Flagler College), to help assess whether students find library guides created with the LGAS rubric impactful. Following the positive outcomes of the study, we decided to design a training workbook for librarians. We felt this was pertinent as we wanted any librarian or library staff member to access the LGAS rubric.

Developing a solution, though, is only half of the journey. We also aimed to disseminate the research, our workbook, and tool broadly and to provide other solutions for training librarians and library staff on how to employ the LGAS rubric and peer review process effectively. The development phase of designing the LGAS and its positive outcomes in Moukhliss & McCowan (2024)'s case study on the LGAS is published online through the OER journal In the Library with the Lead Pipe.

LGAS Recognition

After the Moukhliss & McCowan (2024) article was published, the LGAS rubric garnered attention after being mentioned on the American Library Association website, the American Library Association member newsletter, and the American College of Research Libraies newsletter. More recently, the LGAS rubric was indexed in the online repository OER Africa.

The LGAS Canva Workbook

Shortly after I created the LGAS rubric, we created a training workbook with the editorial skills of Trina McCowan Adams and uploaded it to the LGAS library guide. It now lives on the University of North Florida's LGAS Resources for a Peer Review Team library guide. The training workbook includes an introduction, information about the OSCQR SUNY remix, and information on how to use the LGAS rubric. Subsections include a description of the LGAS rubric, the peer review process, peer review training, and information on the role of a peer review coordinator. Following the introduction, the workbook includes a copy of the LGAS standards and annotations. Finally, the workbook provides a link to a YouTube tutorial, walking the learner through reviewing a guide with the LGAS standards.

Asynchronous Training

After we published the workbook in the library guide, I contemplated reasons why librarians or library staff may choose not to employ the LGAS rubric. One primary concern was time and training limitations. I decided to combat these potential barriers by developing an asynchronous training course on the LGAS and to house it on a UNF library guide, **LGAS Training Materials for a Peer Review Team**. Asynchronous training ensures that librarians and library staff can train around their busy schedules. The training also acts as a resource that they can visit as they start their reviews of library guides.

Additionally, I created an online form using Qualtrics that reviewers can fill out based on the 32 standards. I provide instructions in the asynchronous training on how anyone with access to Qualtrics surveys can replicate the form easily, saving time and effort in learning Qualtrics. As a caveat, the LGAS Training Materials for a Peer Review Team library guide was designed using the LGAS rubric.

The LGAS Workbook Transitions to an OER Platform

Currently, we are working toward publishing the LGAS Workbook with the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC) on one of its OER platforms. The goal of the LGAS rubric is for other colleagues to have access to the tools and utilize them to fit their institutional needs. With the help of FLVC, we are getting closer to completing our goal. We hope to have the workbook published early in 2026.

Conclusion

We invite you to explore the LGAS resources. The LGAS rubric, along with its accompanying workbook and asynchronous training materials, empowers librarians to collaboratively assess and improve library guides with a focus on student-centered learning. By providing clear standards, annotations, and scalable training resources, the LGAS initiative fosters a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement. Its growing recognition and potential transition to an OER platform further underscore its value as a sustainable and accessible tool for the library community.

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INCLUDE AI IN OUR LIBRARIES OR BE A VEGETABLE!

BY OTIS D. ALEXANDER

Otis D. Alexander, PhD, serves as the library director at Saint John Vianney College Seminary in Miami and holds membership in the Florida Library Association. He completed the Leadership for Academic Librarians program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. For correspondence, contact oalexander@sjvcs.edu.

If Artificial intelligence (AI) is not already in our libraries, it will be soon. There are two ways to proceed: we can welcome it and use it to help us do what we do best, which is helping our customers by finding, checking, and sharing information;. or we can do nothing and let it take over because we are too afraid or unwilling to keep up with the fast-changing world of information.

Librarians should strive to integrate our knowledge, creativity, and cultural activities with AI to enhance our ability to serve people effectively, both now and in the future.
AI is already in our libraries, and we serve our customers with it in some way or another. It is already used in reference and cataloging. How is it used?

To understand the benefits of AI, we first need to explain what AI is. AI refers to creating computer programs that can perform tasks typically done by people, such as learning from experience, understanding human language, identifying patterns, making decisions, and utilizing robots that can collaborate with us.

When I mention AI tools, I mean computer programs that use artificial intelligence and machine learning to automatically translate text, speech, or pictures from one language to another. These programs can also understand language, recognize images, make predictions, learn from information, and perform tasks automatically. You can get AI software from companies like Adobe, OpenAI, DeepL, Google Translate, and IBM Watson. AI can make suggestions tailored to each library customer because it can remember what you've discussed before. For example, if someone has previously searched for “renewable energy” and now asks about “power sources,” the AI might ask if they want to continue learning about renewables or explore other types.

However, remember that some advanced AI programs, like GPT-4 and Gemini, cannot be downloaded for free from the Internet. Gemini is run by Google and is not available as a download, but you can use it on the Google Gemini website and through Google services. Access is free with a Google account. These tools can be used in many ways.

Reference librarians can utilize AI in various ways to make information more accessible, personalized, and user-friendly. For example, AI chatbots can answer common questions about library hours, borrowing policies, account management, and catalog searching. They may also suggest books, articles, or databases that might be helpful to patrons. In places like South Florida, where many people speak languages other than English, AI translation tools can help by translating catalog entries, instructions, or even live chat conversations.

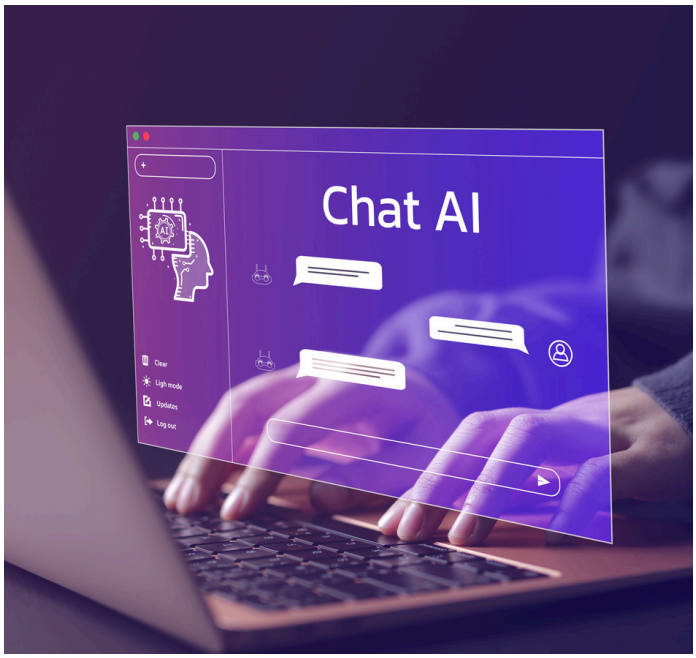
AI can even be used in mundane library tasks like organizing books and other materials. Processes can be simplified and expedited by scanning barcodes and ISBNs. This is possible by using AI tools that can read text from images, like Google Vision, ABBYY FineReader, and Tesseract. These tools can scan and extract information from book covers, spines, or title pages, including the title, author, ISBN, and publisher. For example, instead of typing in the book title, *Florida Bucket List: Explore Hidden Gems and Iconic Destinations. Turn Your Dreams into Reality While Creating Lifelong Memories,* by Dylan Marston and Rachel Marston, published in 2024, you can simply scan the ISBN number and the rest of the details will fill in automatically. This makes the job much easier and saves librarians a significant amount of time.

INCLUDE AI IN OUR LIBRARIES OR BE A VEGETABLE

These tools enable librarians to spend more time on other tasks, such as re-shelving books or relocating materials to the archives. It gives librarians the means to focus on helping with more difficult questions.

Globally, public libraries are leveraging the benefits of AI. These systems include, but are not limited to: the New York Public Library, the Toronto Public Library in Canada, the San Francisco Public Library, the Singapore National Library Board, and the Helsinki City Library in Finland. Some Florida institutions are integrating AI into research, teaching, campus operations, and student services, including Saint John Vianney College Seminary, Florida International University, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Florida. Additionally, public libraries in Florida are exploring and implementing various forms of AI to enhance services and improve efficiency.

Embracing AI in our libraries is essential to stay relevant and efficient in a rapidly changing world. Without adapting to these advancements, libraries risk falling behind and becoming obsolete.



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RENEWING THE CULTURE OF CRITICAL THINKING: THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN AN AGE OF AI AND DISTRACTION

By Dr. Suzanne Morrison-Williams, Chief Academic Officer
and Andrew Anderson, Chief Executive Officer
Library & Information Resources Network

Introduction: A Shifting Educational Landscape

Picture a college student juggling coursework with endless TikTok scrolling, while asking ChatGPT to draft an essay that should have been an exercise in deep analysis. This image, once hypothetical, now mirrors the everyday realities in higher education. The confluence of pandemic-era learning gaps, the social media attention economy, and the explosive rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools has created a perfect storm of cognitive dilution.

For institutions, faculty, and students alike, this moment can feel destabilizing. Yet among academic professionals, librarians are uniquely positioned to confront such times. Librarians stand at the intersection of information literacy and pedagogy, and cannot remain silent.

Three Forces Reshaping Student Learning

COVID-19's Lingering Shadow

The pandemic disrupted learning in unprecedented ways. Entire school years were fragmented by shutdowns, and students were often_"just passed through to the next grade level" without mastering foundational skills.[1] One educator described it bluntly: "Gone were skills in studying, sitting in classrooms, and taking notes."[2]

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has repeatedly highlighted how these disruptions weakened literacy outcomes. Commissioner Peggy Carr noted that school shutdowns derailed learning "across all subjects (including reading)."[3] While colleges hoped students would catch up, many arrived with weakened habits of sustained reading, study, and comprehension. These are the same students now confronting higher education's demands with fragile skills.

The Social Media Attention Economy

At the same time, social media has reshaped how young adults consume information. The Pew Research Center found that 39 percent of U.S. adults under 30 now regularly get news from TikTok compared to only 19 percent of those aged 30 to 49.[4] This reliance on fast, visual snippets may be convenient, but it undermines habits of sustained inquiry, something which we as librarians enshrined in the Pillars of Information Literacy.[5]

The Surgeon General has already flagged social media's impact on youth mental health, while the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development Study tracks its effects on healthy brain development.[6][7] Beyond health, another concern arises: "how and under what circumstances can social media impair literacy and literary imagination?"[8]

The rapid-scrolling environment discourages depth. For students, it often means information is accepted without evaluation, thus undermining skills in Media Literacy. For educators, it means learners not only arrive in classrooms woefully under-informed, but also less prepared to wrestle with nuance or critically interrogate sources. Too often, because it is on the internet and/or social media, students choose not to investigate the veracity or derivation of information which is a major flaw and gap in their educational process.

1. Trattner, 2025
2. Perfas, 2024
3. NAEP, 2023
4. Tomasik and Matsa, 2025
5. Bent and Stubbings, 2011
6. OSG, 2023
7. ABCD, 2021
8. Iyengar, 2024

RENEWING THE CULTURE OF CRITICAL THINKING

The Allure of Artificial Intelligence

No factor looms larger today than AI. Universities are struggling to decide how to respond. As Princeton professor D. Graham Burnett references in an article published in the New Yorker, “In one department, a recently drafted anti-AI policy, read literally, would actually have barred faculty from giving assignments to students that centered on AI."[9] In another case, an external review panel warned that institutions must urgently address "the looming AI disruptions to our teaching and research."[10] Yet, the initial reception to such warnings was "notably cool."

Meanwhile, students aren't waiting for guidance. They are embracing AI tools, sometimes as learning aids, but too often as shortcuts. As Spanish and social science teacher, Jamie Davis González, noted, "So many kids are struggling to develop the most basic level of comprehension and analysis skills because they offload all of that to machines to do for them."[11]

The dangers are compounded by findings such as those from a recent study, which revealed a significant negative correlation between frequent AI tool usage and critical thinking abilities.[12] In other words, the more students rely on AI, the less capable they become at independent reasoning. Fast Company’s Ryan Trattner has further warned that direct-answer AI may be creating a "COVID 2.0" generation of students who have not lost a single year, but instead have lost a significant portion of their educational development.[13]

The Perfect Storm of Cognitive Dilution

Individually, each of these forces—pandemic gaps, social media saturation, and AI-reliance—would pose a challenge. Together, they amount to cognitive dilution: a weakening of sustained attention, authentic literacy, and the ability to think critically and independently.

This phenomenon is measurable. According to the NCES, the percentage of U.S. adults ages 16 to 65 who fall in the lowest level of literacy has increased from 19 percent in 2017 to 28 percent in 2023.[14] As Dr. Maria Novello further notes, "This problem extends far beyond simple test scores; rather it reflects a broader collapse in critical thinking."[15]

The link between literacy and critical thinking is inseparable. Literacy is not just decoding text; it is the foundation of interpretation, synthesis, and judgment. Without it, critical thinking cannot flourish. Without critical thinking, literacy becomes rote. When both weaken, students lose their intellectual agency and society loses informed citizens capable of democratic participation.

The Stakes of Ignoring the Trend

If we fail to respond, the consequences will reverberate across every level of higher education:

- **For students:** reduced problem-solving skills, weaker writing and communication, dependency on tools instead of their own cognition. This diminishes their abilities and skills as future members of society.
- **For faculty:** frustration with underprepared learners, heavier remediation burdens, and difficulty sustaining rigorous curricula. Faculty struggles with changing teaching styles and developing strategies to create solutions that work academically and sociologically.
- **For institutions**: declining retention rates, eroded academic credibility, and reputational risks.
- **For society:** diminished civic engagement and the erosion of shared intellectual life.

Collectively, these outcomes point to more than a set of academic challenges: they signal a deeper erosion of independent thought itself.

When higher education ceases to cultivate critical minds, society loses its capacity to question, to reason, and to imagine collectively. The stakes, then, extend well beyond the classroom: they touch the very core of what it means to participate in a functioning democracy.

9. Burnett, 2025
10. Burnett, 2025
11. Ruvalcaba, 2025
12. Gerlich, 2025
13. Trattner, 2025
14. U.S. Dept. of Education, 2024
15. Ruvalcaba, 2025

RENEWING THE CULTURE OF CRITICAL THINKING

Why Librarians Must Lead

Libraries have always been at the crossroads of information and education. Today, our role as literacy stewards makes us uniquely qualified to confront this storm.

First, we must acknowledge the deficiencies without stigma. Students are not at fault for the disruptions and digital landscapes they inherited. What is untenable is the assumption that we can restrict new tools and expect teaching and learning to proceed unchanged, as though the world has not shifted around us. This is not the first time technology has created new standards; the inception of tools such as the ballpoint pen and the computer had similar reactions. Libraries rose to meet the challenge. It is time for us to do so again.

Second, we must understand the contributing factors deeply. That means equipping ourselves with knowledge of AI's risks and potential, analyzing trends in social media use, and interpreting data on learning loss. Librarians are trained in information literacy, positioning us to lead conversations about evaluating sources, questioning tools, and practicing reflective learning.

Finally, we must coalesce as academic professionals. This is not work librarians can do alone. But we can initiate partnerships with faculty, propose collaborative workshops, and design interventions that embed literacy and critical thinking into curricula.

Toward Mitigation: Steps Forward

While there is no panacea, librarians can take practical steps to help mitigate the damage:

- **Develop AI Literacy Programming**
  - Help students understand both the potential and limits of AI.
  - Train them to critically evaluate AI outputs, verify sources, and use these tools responsibly.
- **Reinforce Information Literacy Frameworks**
  - Update the ACRL Framework for today's realities.
  - Emphasize evaluating online content, especially in fast-moving social media environments.
- **Promote Deep Reading and Critical Dialogue**
  - Curate programming that values slow, intentional reading.
  - Facilitate reading groups, writing labs, or dialogic workshops that counteract shallow consumption habits.
- **Support Faculty Partnerships**
  - Collaborate on assignment design that resists easy outsourcing to AI.
  - Provide teaching resources that integrate literacy and critical thinking reinforcement.
- **Advance Professional Development**
  - Stay ahead of technological trends to better guide students and faculty.
  - Build inter-institutional collaborations to share best practices and resources.

Conclusion: A Call to Coalesce

The storm cannot be reversed. The pandemic happened, social media is societally entrenched, and AI will only grow more sophisticated. Librarians must embrace our roles as front-line responders, advocates, and partners. We cannot afford to be passive service providers while students lose the very skills higher education was built to cultivate. Instead, we must lead with conviction, collaboration, and creativity.

The future of literacy and critical thinking in higher education may be uncertain, but one thing is clear: without librarians, the storm of cognitive dilution will leave even deeper scars. With us, however, institutions and students have guides who can steady the ship, reclaim the value of inquiry, and keep alive the human capacity to think for ourselves.

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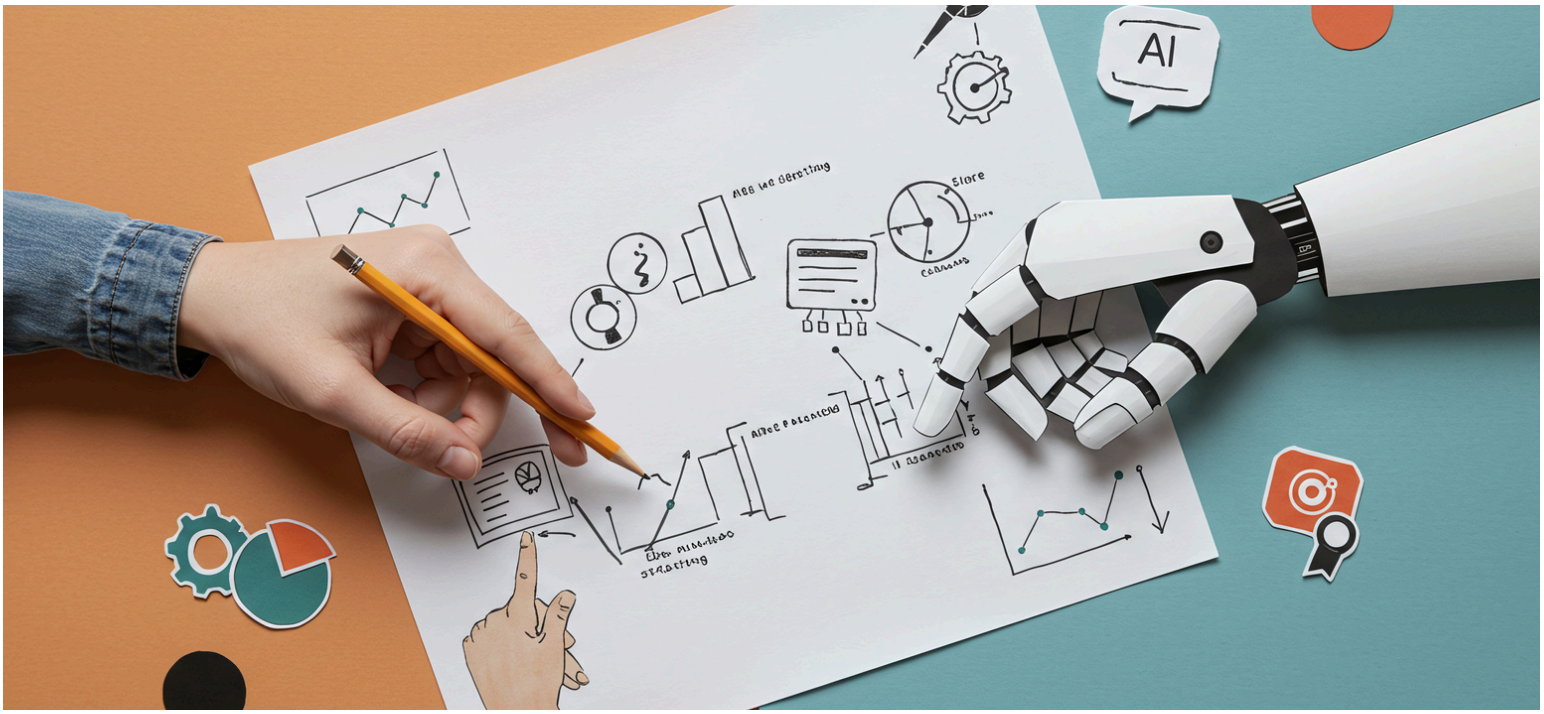


Health Literacy Integration at AdventHealth University: A Comprehensive Approach

Jessica Daly, B.S.Ed., MLS
Health Literacy Coordinator, Assistant Professor
R.A. Williams Library, AdventHealth University

Abstract
Health literacy plays a crucial role in determining health outcomes by influencing an individual's ability to access, comprehend, and apply health-related information effectively. AdventHealth University (AHU) launched the Health Literacy Integration Program in 2024 in response to the growing need for health literacy education. This initiative continues to expand, incorporating university-wide webinars, community partnerships, curriculum integration, and professional outreach efforts. This article provides an overview of the program's key components, achievements, and future directions.

Introduction
AdventHealth University is dedicated to enhancing health literacy among its students, staff, and faculty to support informed health decisions and improved health outcomes. Since its inception in 2022, the health literacy initiative has grown into a multifaceted program that extends its impact beyond the university to benefit the broader community.

Health literacy has emerged as a critical component of public health and education. Defined as the ability to access, understand, and use health information to make informed decisions, health literacy is closely tied to improved patient outcomes and health equity. Libraries, as trusted community, and academic institutions are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between health information and the populations they serve. This case study explores the multifaceted health literacy outreach initiatives spearheaded by Jessica Daly, Health Literacy Coordinator at the R.A. Williams Library of AdventHealth University, and how these initiatives have evolved to meet the needs of both academic and external communities.

Background and Timeline of Health Literacy Initiatives
In February 2022, Jessica Daly was tasked with continuing health literacy outreach efforts within the community and professional organizations she had begun years prior while working as a consumer health librarian for Orlando Health. Beginning in March of 2022, Daly conducted monthly webinars, partnering with organizations such as the Orange County Library System, Tampa-Hillsborough County Library System, the Florida Library Association, and the Florida Literacy Coalition. These efforts included health literacy webinars aimed at empowering library patrons, librarians, healthcare professionals, and students with accessible and actionable health information.

By November 2023, Daly was encouraged to increase health literacy outreach efforts, emphasizing the need to "expand the market." This marked a turning point, with health literacy becoming a central focus of the library's strategic initiatives. Daly was allowed to spend at least 25 percent of her time on health literacy integration efforts while continuing to act as Head of Collection Development and Electronic Resources and Head of Library Outreach and Marketing. The recognition of Daly's contributions culminated in September 2024 when discussions began about creating a dedicated librarian position focused solely on health literacy. Daly was named Health Literacy Coordinator in November of 2024 and now dedicates all her professional time to the creation, development, and execution of the AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan.

HEALTH LITERACY INTEGRATION AT ADVENTHEALTH UNIVERSITY

The AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan

The AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan is a comprehensive strategy with the goal of embedding health literacy throughout the university and the AdventHealth system. The plan's goals include incorporating health literacy within strategic plans, programs, and educational initiatives; promoting changes in healthcare education to improve communication, informed decision-making, access to services, and collaborating with communities to develop cost-effective strategies for health literacy improvement. Additional objectives include facilitating the sharing of resources, supporting adult education and culturally appropriate health information services, building partnerships, and training all students, faculty, staff, and healthcare providers in health literacy and plain language.

The target populations for this initiative encompass AHU students, faculty, staff, patients, and community members. The plan outlines several key actions within AHU, such as integrating health literacy across curricula, providing health literacy training for faculty and staff, offering plain language consultations, conducting monthly health literacy webinars, and hosting health literacy community outreach events.

It also includes ongoing health literacy scholarship projects and health literacy consultations. The plan emphasizes continuing health literacy education for future clinicians by incorporating health literacy as a component of Whole Person Education.

Daly will draw educational resources from reputable organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, and Healthy People 2030. The plan also benefits from the expertise of health literacy professionals.

The ultimate outcomes of this integration plan include the establishment of an AHU Center for Health Literacy, headed by Daly, and the creation of an AdventHealth Center for Health Literacy to provide education and training to clinicians, patients, and the community. The integration of health literacy is expected to have a significant impact, distinguishing AHU as a leader in health literacy and improving the academic experience for students, staff, and faculty. It is also expected to lead to better clinical experiences for students, increased retention and graduation rates, and greater job opportunities for AHU graduates.

Moreover, AdventHealth will benefit from improved clinician-patient communication, enhanced patient self-care, and better patient outcomes, including a reduction in hospital readmissions. By implementing health literacy strategies, hospitals can mitigate the fiscal impact of readmissions, improve patient care, and reduce costly penalties from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

University Health Literacy Webinars

The program's foundation lies in monthly live health literacy webinars designed to educate AHU students, staff, and faculty. These webinars serve as a vital platform for disseminating health information and fostering a culture of health literacy awareness within the university community. Recordings of these webinars are publicly accessible through the R.A. Williams Library website.

Partnership with AHU Hope Clinic

A pivotal component of AHU's health literacy initiative is the collaboration with the AHU Hope Clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and cardiac rehabilitation services to underserved and uninsured patients. In collaboration with the Occupational Therapy Department in 2024, Daly assisted graduate students in developing plain-language materials and conducting cooking demonstrations focused on the DASH diet. Since that time, she works closely with Hope Clinic leadership to offer health literacy education through webinars, customized health fact sheets, and patient consultations. Daly is also available for health literacy training for the Hope Clinic medical staff.

HEALTH LITERACY INTEGRATION AT ADVENTHEALTH UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Training Pilot
The AdventHealth University Plain Language Training Pilot, launched in August 2025, represents a key milestone in advancing the institution's commitment to health literacy and effective communication. Developed and led by Daly, the program began with the Human Resources Department and received overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants who emphasized the value of clear, compassionate communication in supporting employees and the broader university community. The training equips staff with practical tools to write and speak in plain language, ensuring that information is accessible, understandable, and actionable for all audiences.
Funded in part by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) grant, the pilot will expand across departments through May 2026, fostering a campus-wide culture that prioritizes clarity, inclusivity, and whole-person understanding in every interaction.

Community Partnerships
AHU's health literacy efforts extend beyond campus through strategic partnerships with community organizations. Daly collaborates with the Orange County Library System to deliver monthly public webinars. Daly also contributed to OCLS's Professional Development Days in 2023 and 2024, enhancing health literacy competencies among professional librarians and staff across Central Florida.
In Fall 2024, AHU expanded its outreach by partnering with Seminole State College to present health literacy classes to ESL and GED students preparing for college, a collaboration that continues into Spring 2025.

Echelon Partnership – Continuing Education for Healthcare Professionals
Echelon is the continuing education division of AHU and AdventHealth, specializing in online continuing education and training. Echelon integrates course design and media development, upholding the highest credentialing standards to ensure the best quality educational resources.

Echelon's mission is to serve the continuing education needs of individuals and organizations in the healthcare industry by offering high-quality e-learning and information resources to enhance professional development. The division works closely with AHU and AdventHealth clinical educators, as well as subject matter experts, to assess learner needs and identify professional practice gaps. As part of AdventHealth, operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Echelon draws on a legacy rooted in health and healing. With more than 350 healthcare facilities worldwide and a "Greater as a Whole" philosophy, Echelon benefits from access to a diverse network of seasoned, experienced academic professors from the university.

To ensure courses remain relevant and up-to-date with the most advanced medical standards and practices, Echelon partners with site coordinators from the nine AdventHealth campuses. This collaboration helps identify gaps in healthcare practice, providing a rich source of content expertise, target audiences, and content reviewers who are well-versed in patient care, outcomes, and closing education gaps.

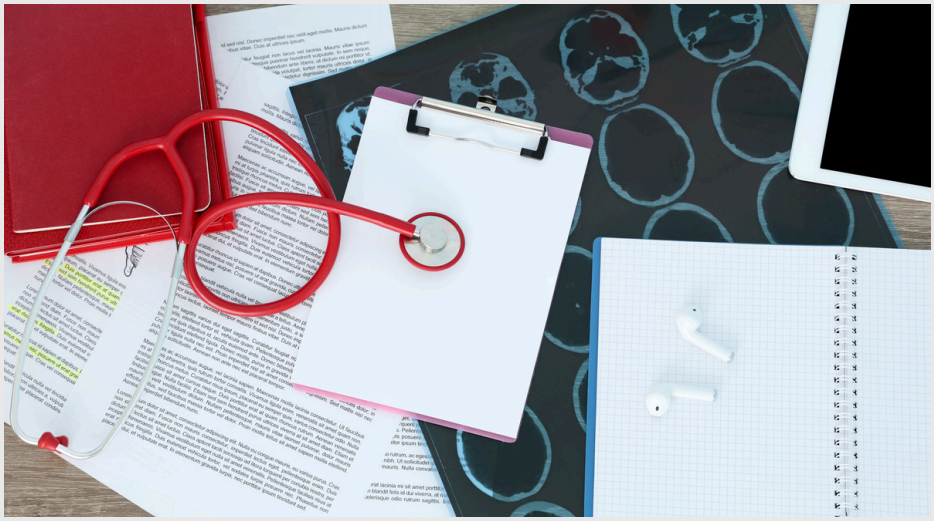
Echelon has recognized health literacy as a key topic for its platform, and work has begun to develop an educational series aimed at medical professionals, faculty, AHU students, and the public.

NNLM Grant
Daly was awarded a National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM) grant in August of 2025 to support the university's Health Literacy Integration Plan. The funding is being used to purchase and develop educational resources for students, staff, faculty, and the community, as well as to host multiple health literacy sessions and events through April 2026. The grant has already supported the Navigating Menopause: Before, During, and After event held in September 2025, which saw strong participation and meaningful outcomes in improving health literacy related to women's health.

Outcomes and Impact
The impact of these initiatives has been far-reaching. Data collected from the 2024 AHU Health Literacy Webinar Series revealed participation from 93 individuals. Feedback surveys highlighted the value of these webinars in enhancing attendees' understanding of health literacy concepts and their applications. Moreover, the occupational therapy graduate student projects and Hope Clinic initiatives highlighted the tangible benefits of integrating health literacy into patient care.

Students at AdventHealth University who receive training in health literacy, plain language, and enhanced patient-provider communication skills gain a distinct advantage in the competitive landscape of health sciences programs. These students are equipped to provide enhanced patient-centered care by excelling in the ability to communicate complex medical concepts in an accessible way, which builds trust with patients across all literacy levels. The training also fosters empathy and understanding, cultivating sensitivity to the diverse needs of patients and strengthening patient-provider relationships.

HEALTH LITERACY INTEGRATION AT ADVENTHEALTH UNIVERSITY



The health literacy training students receive leads to improved health outcomes. By learning how to communicate effectively, AHU-trained providers empower patients to make informed decisions, which often results in better treatment plan compliance and overall health outcomes. This training also focuses on preventative care, enabling students to provide clear, actionable education that helps patients adopt preventative health measures, an essential skill in today's healthcare landscape.

AHU trains its students to excel in interdisciplinary collaboration. Through effective communication, they bridge gaps between professionals from various healthcare disciplines, ensuring smooth teamwork. Their expertise in health literacy allows them to educate peers and patients, making them valuable contributors to both clinical and educational settings.

Graduates from AHU have versatile skillsets which make them highly career-ready. With health literacy and communication skills in high demand, these students are well-positioned to meet the needs of employers seeking healthcare providers who can effectively engage with diverse populations. Their training in communication and literacy prepares them for leadership roles, educational opportunities, and patient-facing positions.

The health literacy training at AHU aligns with industry trends and standards. Many healthcare organizations prioritize health literacy as part of quality improvement and patient safety initiatives, and AHU graduates are equipped to lead in these efforts. Their ability to address health disparities positions them to reduce barriers to care and improve equity in healthcare delivery.

AHU students' training in health literacy strengthens their reputation and professional networks. They are prepared to advocate for health literacy initiatives, positioning themselves as innovators within healthcare organizations. Additionally, their enhanced communication skills allow them to build strong, meaningful relationships with patients, peers, and mentors, which helps expand their professional networks.

By integrating these essential skills into their education, AHU students not only excel in their respective roles but also contribute to the university's reputation as a leader in preparing healthcare professionals capable of addressing the complex challenges of modern healthcare.

Curriculum Integration and Faculty Support

AHU's commitment to Whole Person Education is demonstrated through the integration of health literacy across academic programs. Key contributions by Daly included co-teaching ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 during the Spring 2025 trimester, Summer 2025 Trimester, and the Fall 2025 Trimester where they covered topics such as communication between healthcare providers and patients, health disparities, patient education, and health literacy outcomes and also works as a consultant for graduate students from the Occupational Therapy department as they complete scholarship projects on the topic of health literacy. Daly will also serve as a health literacy consultant for the Health Humanities and Social Sciences Department to help develop a new Bachelor of Science program that incorporates health literacy. Due to the success of these partnerships, Daly is now collaborating with 9 professors across her campus integrating health literacy into their curriculum and classroom instruction. Daly is actively participating in the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee to integrate health literacy into various academic disciplines using plain language.

In addition to these contributions, Daly collaborates with the Center for Faculty Excellence to support faculty development by presenting health literacy sessions at New Faculty Orientations, leading a health literacy-focused session during the March 2025 Lunch and Learn event for faculty, providing health literacy materials on the Center for Faculty Excellence Canvas website, and mentoring faculty interested in integrating health literacy into their curriculum.

HEALTH LITERACY INTEGRATION AT ADVENTHEALTH UNIVERSITY

In 2025, Jessica Daly was invited to join the AHU Mission Integration Team to help educate and integrate health literacy across various aspects of the university. The team focuses on four key pathways that inform its work: Belonging, Wellbeing, Fulfillment, and Purpose. These pathways guide the team's approach to curricular activities, co-curricular activities, and team member development. Daly's expertise in health literacy plays a crucial role in supporting the integration of health literacy principles into these pathways, enhancing both student and faculty engagement with key health-related issues. Her involvement will ensure that health literacy is woven into the university's broader mission of fostering a supportive, holistic, and purpose-driven educational environment.

Professional Leadership and Outreach

Daly's leadership in health literacy extends to professional conferences and educational outreach. She served on the Health Literacy Conference planning committee for the Florida Literacy Coalition in 2023 and 2024, where she also presented at the conference for two consecutive years. In addition, Daly has provided health literacy instruction for library professionals through a variety of organizations, including Southeast Florida Library Information Network, Northeast Florida Library Information Network, Florida Library Association, Southern Chapter of the Medical Library Association, Tampa-Bay Library Consortium, along with individual academic and public libraries.

Recognition and Future Directions

Daly was named Librarian of the Year in 2024 by the Florida Health Sciences Library Association for her work in health literacy. The future of the AHU Health Literacy Integration Plan focuses on continuing to assist professors in integrating health literacy into their classroom curriculum and instruction. A key goal is to build new community partnerships that will help improve health literacy and the overall quality of life in the surrounding community. In recognition of her significant contributions to this effort, Daly was appointed as AHU's Health Literacy Coordinator by the R.A. Williams Library and university leadership in 2024. As the role continues to evolve, her strategic focus aims to enhance the academic experience and foster a broader impact on health literacy across various sectors. Daly's leadership is expected to drive innovation in health literacy education and further establish AHU as a leader in health literacy research and community engagement.

Conclusion

The Health Literacy Integration Program at AHU represents a comprehensive approach to promoting health literacy across academic, professional, and community settings. Through strategic partnerships, curriculum integration, and faculty development, the program empowers individuals to make informed health decisions, improving community health outcomes. Future efforts will focus on expanding outreach initiatives, enhancing faculty engagement, and further integrating health literacy across diverse academic disciplines.

The health literacy initiatives at AdventHealth University's R.A. Williams Library exemplify the transformative potential of academic libraries in addressing public health challenges. By fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, engaging with community partners, and developing innovative educational programs, AHU's library has set a benchmark for integrating health literacy into academic and healthcare settings. This case study highlights the importance of vision, persistence, and adaptability in driving meaningful change, offering a model for other libraries seeking to expand their impact in health literacy education.

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THE cost OF NEGLECT

CARLOS BAFFIGO,
PRINCIPAL AND PARTNER AT BUILDING BASICS FOR LIBRARIES
BB4LIBS.COM

Carlos Baffigo is the Principal and Partner at Building Basics for Libraries (BB4Libs), a consultancy dedicated to helping libraries plan, maintain, and manage their facilities more effectively. With over 30 years of experience in public library operations and facility oversight—including service as Deputy Library Director for Pasadena Public Library—Carlos works with librarians, architects, and building professionals to strengthen the connection between library service and the spaces that make it possible. Through workshops, webinars, and on-site seminars, he educates librarians and library facility managers on how to better understand, care for, and advocate for their buildings.

In towns and cities across the country, public libraries stand as pillars of equity, education, and civic life. They anchor communities where children discover books, job seekers access the internet, immigrants prepare for citizenship, and lifelong learners connect through programs. Yet the library's role as a vibrant hub increasingly faces one of its greatest threats: the condition of the building itself.

For many library systems, aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and years of underinvestment have taken their toll. When facilities deteriorate, the damage spreads—reducing public use, harming the library's reputation, limiting funding, and pushing the institution to the margins of local government.

Even as librarians and directors modernize services and design innovative programming, they often undermine their own efforts by giving buildings low priority. Budget constraints, competing responsibilities, and ingrained culture all contribute. But deferring repairs or neglecting facilities sends a clear message: innovation matters, the building does not. Over time, this disconnect erodes trust and weakens the impact of even the best-designed services.

Deteriorating Facilities Drive Down Circulation and Visitors

The library's physical environment directly shapes whether people use it. Outdated spaces with poor lighting, weak ventilation, or visible disrepair tell the public this is not a place of care, innovation, or safety. Patrons quickly turn away from damaged flooring, flickering lights, broken seating, or nonfunctional restrooms. In colder regions, unreliable heating leaves buildings uncomfortable. In warmer ones, broken air conditioning can render entire wings unusable for months.

The connection between space and use is not abstract. When a midsized public library in the Midwest replaced outdated carpet, upgraded lighting, and renovated restrooms, circulation rose 18 percent within two years, and program attendance nearly doubled. Families who had stopped attending storytimes returned. Seniors who had avoided the space because of poor lighting came back.

By contrast, libraries that delay maintenance often see usage plummet. A leaking roof in one Southern city forced the library to rope off an entire wing for months. Although staff worked hard to provide services elsewhere, circulation dropped by 30 percent during that period. Patrons, once lost, often do not return.

Renovations tell a different story. Studies consistently show that when libraries upgrade their facilities, circulation and attendance rise sharply. Clean, modern, accessible spaces draw people in. But when the building declines, usage falls—even when services remain strong.

Unsafe Buildings Invite Misuse

Neglected facilities often attract unintended use. Broken locks, failing security systems, and dim exterior lighting invite vandalism, theft, and loitering. Libraries must remain open and inclusive, but they must also ensure families, students, and seniors feel safe inside.

The presence of security risks not only deters potential users but also undermines staff morale. A library director in California reported that staff injuries due to unsafe flooring resulted in workers' compensation claims, higher insurance costs, and staff turnover. These hidden expenses consume budgets that could otherwise support programs or collections.

Unaddressed safety hazards lead to staff injuries, more calls to police or first responders, and growing public concern. Once the library becomes known as unsafe or chaotic, parents stop bringing children, seniors stop attending programs, and community confidence collapses.

Libraries that invest in security and upkeep, however, see the opposite effect. Improved lighting, well-maintained entrances, and functioning surveillance systems create a perception of care and safety. That perception itself becomes a form of community reassurance.

Declining Usage Metrics Trigger Budget Cuts

Circulation, visitor counts, and program attendance drive most funding decisions. City governments, state agencies, and donors use these statistics to allocate resources. When poor facilities suppress usage, decision-makers may wrongly assume community interest has faded.

Deferred maintenance also carries compounding costs. A small leak left unattended can become a structural crisis, threatening electrical systems or collections. Mold remediation, asbestos abatement, or structural reinforcement can cost millions—expenses far greater than early interventions.

One New England library illustrates the danger. A leaking skylight, left unrepaired for years, caused water damage that eventually required a $2.5 million emergency repair project. Had the skylight been addressed earlier, the cost would have been less than $100,000.

Funding bodies rarely distinguish between low usage caused by poor facilities and low usage caused by lack of community interest. Without context, decision-makers often scale back library budgets, further weakening the institution's ability to respond. This cycle of decline—neglect, reduced usage, budget cuts—becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

THE COST OF NEGLECT

Neglect Damages the Library's Image

Libraries symbolize education, civic progress, and public investment. A neglected building tarnishes that image. Patrons question the library's professionalism, reliability, and relevance. In an era when libraries must justify themselves against digital alternatives, the optics of a crumbling building are especially damaging.

Image matters. Donors are less likely to contribute to institutions that look abandoned or neglected. Volunteers gravitate toward organizations that inspire pride. Even staff recruitment suffers when prospective employees see outdated, poorly maintained facilities.

Outdated facilities suggest to residents that the city no longer values the library. This perception affects not only patron engagement but also staff morale, donor interest, and partnership opportunities. By contrast, a well-kept library inspires civic pride, volunteerism, and community ownership.

Libraries that invest in visible upgrades—like new windows, bright interiors, or welcoming entrances—often benefit from renewed media coverage and community buzz. The building itself becomes a marketing tool.

Libraries Lose Ground in Civic Planning

Libraries that fail to present themselves as vital civic spaces risk being sidelined in municipal planning. When city leaders discuss economic development, education, or smart-city initiatives, neglected libraries rarely make the list of viable partners.

Yet libraries can play pivotal roles. A well-maintained facility can serve as a climate resilience hub during extreme heat or cold, a technology center for job seekers, a childcare partner for schools, or a neutral space for civic engagement.

Examples abound. During the 2021 Texas freeze, libraries that had invested in backup power and HVAC systems became emergency warming centers. In New York, renovated branch libraries serve as after-school learning hubs, filling gaps left by overburdened schools. But these roles require reliable infrastructure.

When libraries cannot maintain their own spaces, city leaders hesitate to entrust them with broader responsibilities. A crumbling building does more than inconvenience patrons—it sidelines the library from the larger civic table.

Neglect Sends the Wrong Message

Ignoring a library's physical condition is never neutral. It tells the community, the staff, and future generations that the library does not matter. But investment in buildings affirms that knowledge, safety, and public service remain civic priorities.

The effects ripple outward. Neglect produces declining circulation, eroded trust, strained budgets, and fading relevance. Care and investment, by contrast, create magnets for engagement, symbols of civic pride, and multipliers of public good.

The time to act is now—before buildings fall too far into disrepair and, with them, the chance to restore libraries to their rightful place at the heart of civic life.

THE COST OF NEGLECT

From Neglect to Stewardship: Action Steps

The good news is that neglect is not inevitable. Communities can take practical, proactive steps to protect libraries and restore them as vibrant civic spaces. The first and most important step is education.

1. Educate Staff, Boards, and the Public

Invest in ongoing training for staff, boards, and trustees to understand building systems, maintenance cycles, and capital planning. Workshops and webinars can help staff connect facilities directly to service outcomes. Public education campaigns also build voter and donor awareness, reinforcing that buildings matter as much as programs.

Example: The Library of Virginia launched statewide training on facility management, helping directors learn how to write maintenance schedules and capital requests. Libraries that participated reported greater confidence when presenting to city councils and improved success in securing funds.

2. Conduct Regular Facility Assessments

Schedule annual inspections to identify maintenance needs early. Maintain a facility profile that documents warranties, system details, and compliance requirements so future leaders have a reliable roadmap.

Example: One California library created a digital facility profile that included blueprints, inspection records, and vendor contacts. When a new director was hired, she could immediately see what systems were under warranty, saving both time and money.

3. Prioritize Preventive Maintenance

Create a preventive maintenance plan for HVAC, roofing, lighting, and safety systems. Proactive care keeps costs predictable and avoids the downward spiral of emergency repairs.

Example: A Florida library saved $80,000 in one fiscal year by contracting for quarterly HVAC inspections rather than waiting for costly emergency breakdowns.

4. Integrate Facilities into Strategic Planning

Place facilities at the center of the library's strategic plan. Treat the building as essential infrastructure, not a background cost.

Tip: Every strategic plan should include a section on capital needs and a schedule for future upgrades. This keeps facilities visible at the policy level.

5. Engage the Public in Capital Planning

Involve the community in discussions about building needs through forums, surveys, and design charrettes. Transparency fosters trust and strengthens support for funding requests.

Example: A library in Oregon invited residents to tour its failing HVAC system before proposing a bond measure. Seeing the rusted pipes firsthand persuaded voters to approve funding.

6. Leverage Partnerships and Grants

Seek grants and partnerships with schools, health agencies, and workforce organizations. These collaborations not only broaden funding opportunities but also expand the library's role as shared civic space.

Example: A Midwest library partnered with its local health department to create a wellness room during a renovation, using grant funding that would not have been available to the library alone.

7. Track and Report Usage Data with Context

Pair attendance and circulation statistics with facility-condition reports. Show that dips in use reflect building limitations, not declining public demand.

Tip: Include facility status in board packets alongside usage statistics. This reinforces the connection between the building and the services it supports.

8. Promote the Library as Civic Infrastructure

Position the library as a critical partner in municipal planning. Highlight its role in workforce development, climate resilience, and civic participation. A strong facility ensures these roles can flourish.

Example: During a city council meeting, one library director emphasized that her building served as the only ADA-accessible community space in the district. Framing the library as infrastructure—not just culture secured additional capital dollars.

By putting education first and following through with consistent planning, libraries can shift from reactive crisis management to proactive stewardship. Investment in facilities does more than preserve buildings—it secures the library's role as a trusted, essential institution at the heart of civic life.

BIG IDEA Dinosaur Adventures

Bring the amazing world of Dinosaurs to your Library! Your patrons will uncover fascinating facts about fossils through our interactive program! Visitors will journey back to a time before recorded history with our engaging lessons. Children and parents can investigate dinosaurs through real fossils, enjoy music, interact with animatronic dinosaurs and participate in fun games.

Meet and Greet with Dinosaurs

See Life Size Fossils

Let your kids become paleontologists for a day with Prehistoric Dinosaur Adventures!

Audience: Ages 4-12

Presentation Time: 60 minutes

Space Needed: A designated area of at least 10x20 feet is required to accommodate backdrops and fossils. Additionally, other program components can be distributed throughout the surrounding space.

Subjects Covered:

- What is a dinosaur?
- Anatomy and behavior
- Types of dinosaurs
- Excavating Fossils
- The ages of dinosaurs

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