College & Research Libraries News

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This month's cover features a 1960 photograph of Barbara Krausel in the Fontbonne College library stacks. Krausel graduated that year from the college's music program with a concentration in organ. When Fontbonne College, now Fontbonne University, was constructed, the library was housed on the fourth floor of the main building. In 1967 a new library was built that included a fine arts gallery, auditorium, and several classrooms. Fontbonne was a women's only institution until the late 1970s.

The Fontebonne University Archives received a small grant from the Fontbonne Community Connection in 2021 to digitize the historic photo collection, and the project was complete in time for the university's centennial celebrations in 2023. The University Archives Photo Collection is available at https://griffinshare.fontbonne.edu/uasc-photos/.

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GPO Joins Digital Preservation Coalition

The US Government Publishing Office (GPO) has joined the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), an international charitable foundation that supports digital preservation. GPO is joining a growing DPC community with 170 members in 24 countries worldwide. The DPC helps its members deliver resilient long-term access to digital content, such as that on GPO's GovInfo, the one-stop site for authentic, published information for all three branches of the federal government.

"GPO remains committed to standards-based approaches to digital preservation, and joining the DPC is another way GPO delivers on its vision of an America Informed," said GPO Director Hugh Nathanial Halpern. "Joining this community means GPO will learn from other leading organizations and contribute our expertise to the community. Ultimately, efforts like this help us serve the American public."

GPO's GovInfo is one of two organizations in the world to be designated as an ISO 16363 Trustworthy Digital Repository. GPO achieved the certification by meeting rigorous criteria for trustworthy digital repositories as defined by experts in the field. GovInfo also earned a CoreTrustSeal certification for the first time in 2024.

Carolina Consortium, Elsevier Announce Read and Publish Agreement

Elsevier and The Carolina Consortium recently announced a new Read and Publish agreement for 2025. The three-year agreement underscores the consortium's commitment to empowering its member institutions with seamless access to scholarly content and sustainable publishing options. The proposed agreement will enable 17 participating institutions to access the latest high-quality scientific content while supporting authors in publishing their work open access, fostering greater visibility and impact of their research.

"We are excited to have the Carolina Consortium and Elsevier come together on an agreement that meets the collective needs of our diverse member libraries while expanding options for our researchers to make their work openly available," said North Carolina State University Senior Vice Provost and Director of Libraries Greg Raschke. "This agreement represents some of the major benefits achieved by the Carolina Consortium by collaborating at a broad scale."

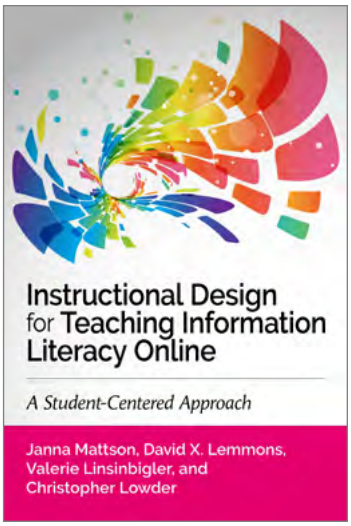
This hybrid model aligns with the global transition toward open access, promoting equitable knowledge dissemination and innovation.

New from ACRL—Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach

ACRL announces the publication of *Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach*, by Janna Mattson, David X. Lemmons, Valerie Linsinbigler, and Christopher Lowder, offering learning activities, lesson plans, worksheets, and more to help you rapidly design effective online instruction.

Demand for online classes in higher education is growing. And whether you're a seasoned library instructor adapting to more online instruction or a new librarian learning about

instruction for the first time, you're probably expected to be equally skilled in both face-to-face and online classrooms.



Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online introduces light-hearted tips and advice with author-curated playlists and practical tips on rapidly designing online instruction. It offers scenarios, learning activities, lesson plan examples, rubrics, worksheets, and more, using the classic instructional design model ADDIE to frame the process and the universal design for learning framework, the community of inquiry model, and asset-based pedagogy to address the social and emotional needs of diverse online learners. Six parts offer a theoretical grounding, practical resources, and the enhanced confidence and skills needed to create successful learning experiences:

- Foundational Knowledge
- Analysis
- Design
- Development
- Implementation
- Evaluation

Online learning can be an opportunity to extend our reach and connection to our students and help them learn what they need to succeed. *Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online* provides a learner-centered approach to online instruction for both students and teachers.

Instructional Design for Teaching Information Literacy Online: A Student-Centered Approach is available for purchase in print and as an ebook through the ALA Online Store; in print through Amazon.com; and by telephone order at (866) 746-7252 in the US or (770) 442-8633 for international customers.

Paradigm, Penn Press Announce Digitization Partnership

Paradigm Publishing Services, a division of De Gruyter Brill, a family-owned publisher headquartered in Berlin since 1749, is partnering with the University of Pennsylvania Press to digitize the backlist of their distribution client, The American Philosophical Society Press (APS Press), the oldest continuously operating scholarly press in North America (since 1743). Some of the APS Press's oldest published titles, including the first 27 volumes of the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, will be digitized in Paradigm's Boston office, as will writings from Benjamin Franklin, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and anthropologist Margaret Mead, among others. De Gruyter Brill will hold library distribution rights to the content for three years.

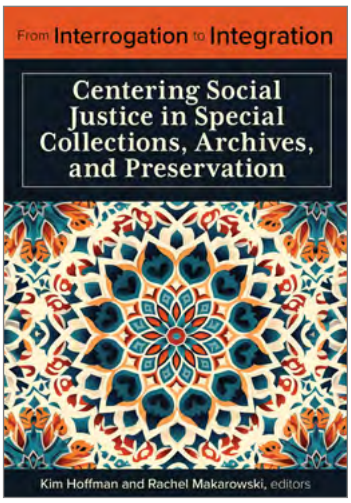
The APS recently joined forces with Penn Press to distribute and market the books and journals published by the APS Press. Both the APS and Penn Press are products of Benjamin Franklin's fertile imagination, and this new partnership brings together the distinctive strengths of two pillars of Philadelphia's intellectual landscape.

UPLOpen Adds 10,000th Open Access Monograph

The De Gruyter eBound Foundation also recently announced a major milestone for University Press Library Open (UPLOpen), its comprehensive open access initiative and ebook platform. Launched in April 2024 with a goal of drawing attention to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UPLOpen now hosts 10,000 open access titles from more than 50 prestigious academic publishers.

The diverse collection of titles on UPLOpen cover a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. A large number of these are new or recently published titles, and more than 1,800 have a copyright date of 2023 or later. Among the publishers represented in UPLOpen are Chicago, Cornell, Duke, NYU, Penn, Stanford, Toronto, De Gruyter, Edinburgh, Manchester, London School of Economics (LSE), Helsinki, and Stockholm. UPLOpen is also home to two unique and complete series collections: Luminos, from the University of California Press, and Toward an Open Monograph Ecosystem (TOME), a five-year pilot project of the Association of American Universities, Association of Research Libraries, and Association of University Presses. Learn more at https://uplopen.com/.

New from ACRL—From Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives, and Preservation



ACRL announces the publication of *From Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives, and Preservation*, edited by Kim Hoffman and Rachel Makarowski, offering accessible, low-cost solutions from authors who have grappled directly with the legacy of harm present in their own institutions.

From their inception, special collections and archives have memorialized the lives of people in power, serving as a tool to preserve the status quo and perpetuate systemic oppression. In five prescriptive sections, *From Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives, and Preservation* collects case studies, research projects, lesson plans, stories, practical strategies, and color illustrations:

- Research
- Description
- Preservation and Access
- Outreach
- Instruction

Centering social justice in our daily practice and tasks is a form of resistance against external pressures. *From Interrogation to Integration* contributes to ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive, diverse, just, and equitable profession while acknowledging both the scale and complexity of that work.

From Interrogation to Integration: Centering Social Justice in Special Collections, Archives, and Preservation is available for purchase in print and as an ebook through the ALA Online

Store; in print through Amazon.com; and by telephone order at (866) 746-7252 in the US or (770) 442-8633 for international customers.

Springshare Acquires CareerShift

Springshare recently announced the acquisition of CareerShift, a software platform that helps students with job search, career, and company research. Springshare acquired CareerShift from Student Playbook LLC who, after this divestiture, will focus on serving the alumni associations market. CareerShift will operate as an independent brand under Springshare's corporate umbrella. Springshare will provide investment, resources, and assistance to grow the CareerShift software platform to realize its full potential as a must-have job and career seeking resource for students and library patrons. More details about this acquisition and any potential impact on customers of both CareerShift and Springshare are available as FAQs on the Springshare website at https://springshare.com/careershift-faq.html.

ARL Publishes Annual Impact Report 2024

2024 was an eventful year for the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and its membership of research libraries and archives in major public and private universities, federal government agencies, and large public institutions in Canada and the United States. ARL's 2024 impact report enumerates the vibrant engagement of ARL's membership that empowers and advocates for research libraries and archives to shape, influence, and implement institutional, national, and international policy and develop the next generation of leaders. The report also demonstrates the value created by and for membership in an association that works collaboratively with many other organizations to advance equitable access to knowledge. The report is available on the ARL website at https://www.arl.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ARL-Annual-Impact-Report-2024.pdf.

Tech Bits . . .

Brought to you by the ACRL ULS Technology in University Libraries Committee

Magic Studio brings together Canva's AI tools in one place. Generate personalized templates based on inputted text prompts or uploaded images with Magic Design, craft textual content from prompts with Magic Write, and convert text prompts into images, graphics, or videos with Magic Media. All Canva plans have these features, but use is more limited in free accounts.

Paid accounts provide access to additional AI tools. Change colors and styles with Magic Edit, remove objects and backgrounds with Magic Eraser, and move elements with Magic Grab. Add patterns and textures to text and shapes with Magic Morph, apply motions with Magic Animate, and swap formats, dimensions, and languages with Magic Switch. Canva users can speed up the design process by employing these new AI tools.

—Jennifer Long
Troy University

. . . Canva's Magic Studio
https://www.canva.com/magic

Martin Garnar and Dustin Fife

Fear and Politics

Today's Climate in Academic Libraries

Academic Library Workers in Conversation is a *C&RL News* series focused on elevating the everyday conversations of library professionals. The wisdom of the water-cooler has long been heralded, but this series hopes to go further by minimizing barriers to traditional publishing with an accessible format. Each of the topics in the series were proposed by the authors and they were given space to explore. This conversation is about the current political climate for academic libraries and how library workers can support each other.—*Dustin Fife, series editor*

Dustin Fife: Martin, the world is moving fast. Laws and policies are being manipulated at breakneck speed and education is being flooded with a reassertion of a status quo that many of us believe is harmful and counter to our institutional missions and personal values. While I know legal exposure is a literal and existential threat to many organizations, I am also seeing a troubling trend across higher education toward proactive compliance before courts have completed reviews.

At the same time, I know there are no easy answers as the threat of legal challenges can come from inside or outside our communities, from federal and state actors, or special interest groups. I have already been part of discussions in a library consortium where it was decided to end a proposed initiative proactively, institutions began changing how awards and scholarships are allocated even before the recent "Dear Colleague" letter on February 14, 2025.[1] Our national organizations are changing the descriptions of some of their programs, and I, as an incredibly privileged person at a private organization in a fairly liberal state, have felt levels of personal concern and instability that I have never experienced before. And while I know these are not new problems in our society, they do feel particularly palpable at this moment in time.

All that to ask, now what, Martin? What role should libraries play within their communities as hostility toward higher education grows? How are we going to maintain our individual North Stars?

Martin Garnar: So many questions, Dustin! Let's cut down on the overwhelm factor and try to answer one at a time. Before I start on that, I want to reflect on your status quo comment. For me, what's been really disorienting have been the attacks on things that I would have categorized as the status quo, such as orderly (if not welcome) changes in policy when a new administration takes power or the assumption that our country wouldn't be openly

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threatening the sovereignty of our closest allies. As of this writing, it's still too soon to tell what will actually happen as a result of all these initiatives, but it's still hard to believe that we're living in a time when there's actual proposed legislation[1] to buy "or otherwise acquire" Greenland and rename it Red, White, and Blueland.

Of the questions you posed, the one I want to answer first is how we're going to maintain our individual North Stars, and I'm going to interpret "individual" to mean both my personal values as well as my individual library's values. If we don't center our values in our work, then I think we're much more prone to make decisions out of fear or expediency. I'm reinforcing my personal values by making sure I'm staying connected to like-minded people and talking about how to support our shared values in these trying times. I've been doing that through formal means like facilitating the ALA Intellectual Freedom Round Table's IFRT Reads program and getting more involved in my faith community, and I've been doing that through informal means like more regular check-ins with friends and family to process the latest news.

As for my library's values, I'm really glad that we invested the time in drafting our values statement a few years ago using an inclusive process. We use them to engage with job applicants and see what resonates with them, and it's been heartening to hear them talk about why the values are an important factor in why they want to work at our library. We've also developed a values framework that we use when drafting policies or creating new committees to help us think about how those mechanisms of our daily work should be supporting our values. The most recent set of documents that went through that process were collection development and reconsideration of library materials policies. Drafting the former was a good exercise in reminding us what's important to communicate about equity of access and diverse collections, while drafting the latter was filling a policy gap. I know that many academic libraries don't have a reconsideration policy because most challenges are directed at public and school libraries, but given the times we're living in, I think it's essential that EVERY library has good policies for dealing with challenges.

Dustin, what are you doing to keep your compass pointed at the North Star?

Dustin: Thank you for easing my overwhelm, Martin. Just one question at a time. I can do that.

I love your approach to focusing on and reinforcing your personal and organizational values. Strong policy and values can help mitigate fear and should replace expediency whenever possible. And, as the Berenstain Bears taught me as a child, "it's never too late to correct a mistake."[3] By that I mean, it's never too late to fill a policy gap. Building policies on shared values is essential to progress. I am an educator though, so I do hope to change hearts and minds, but the good thing about policy work is that you can take steps to make your libraries more supportive while you wait. Policy is key to lasting transformational change. When policies are done well they do not constrain; they inform, empower, and protect. I believe this is an important moment to look inward and align policies so that team members have the support that they deserve. Good policy also benefits all community members by making services more legible.

Not to belabor my love of policy, but this work is something that we have a lot of influence over as library teams. Yes, there are federal, state, and even institutional policies that we do not control. However, there is so much that we do control that affects our environments and the experiences of library users and workers on a daily basis. If you want to make the

library more accessible to all, it is a good time to dive deeply into the spirit and law of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you want to build a supportive and inclusive team, it is essential to look at hiring and retention programs. There is a reason that higher education is being challenged through aggressive policy change. It works. It is also a tool at our disposal though, and libraries should use it.

I also love your approach to fortifying yourself with personal connections. How do we fortify our colleagues beyond policies?

Martin: That's a great question. Though I'm mindful that it's neither good nor healthy to promote a workplace as a family, as that can improperly blur the lines between work and personal lives, I do care about my colleagues, especially when there's horrible stuff happening in the world. I think one of the most important things that leaders can do is to talk about what's on their mind and create the space for others to chime in so they know they're not alone. I send a daily email to my staff (a story for another time) and use that venue to mention news items or other events that might impact us.

For example, when that "Dear Colleague" letter on DEI initiatives came out over a weekend, I talked about it in my Monday email and noted that our college's Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion was holding a previously scheduled public session that afternoon to talk about how they are approaching their work in this climate. I saw six of my library colleagues in the audience, and while I don't know if it was my announcement that put the event on their radar, at minimum I made it clear that they could use work time to attend. On other occasions, when I've mentioned something that's on my mind, I've had staff contact me to share their thoughts on the topic or to simply thank me for naming some of the challenges we're all facing. I try to make it clear that I often don't have the answers for what to do, but by making the space to talk about what's happening, our collective minds can usually come up with possible ways to respond.

We are also fortunate to have a Center for Restorative Practices at the college that, among other services, offers something called Circle Keepers training to give participants the skills to facilitate discussions about tough topics. One of the library's Circle Keepers offered a session for library staff in January for anyone who wanted to check in about how they were feeling in the current political moment. About a quarter of the team attended, and while I won't get into specifics of what was shared (part of the ground rules for participating), I will note that one of the themes was concern from and for our trans colleagues. Afterward, participants noted that it was important to have a place to talk about their fears and be reminded of the resources available to them as well as to affirm that their colleagues are there for them.

On a purely biological level, I always have snacks in my office and make a point of bringing in donuts from the local shop on a regular basis. Sometimes the folks who stop by just grab something and say thanks, but others take the opportunity to stay and chat about what's on their mind. When that happens, it's a chance for me to reinforce the fact that I care about them both as colleagues and as people, and whether I'm offering solutions or just commiserating, I hope my staff are getting the message that I'm here for them.

Dustin, what other obstacles do you see coming?

Dustin: First, I think you hit something there that is so important. There need to be dedicated spaces to integrate how the current environment impacts us professionally. We need honest conversation. We need to continue to name things. Of particular importance to libraries, beyond wellness for all library workers, will be censorship. I do think that we

will see some textbook censorship that will NEED to be challenged in courts, but we will see much more self-censorship and "chilling." We have talked about these topics for generations, but even now I see how I have chosen to use words in this article that are different from what I would have used previously. That is a real outcome. There will be widespread self-censorship. We also should recognize that some have always had to use these practices to be safe in higher education. We need to "name it to tame it," as my therapist, and many others I am sure, love to say. Make space for people and do not dismiss concerns. But do not assume the agreement of everyone on our campuses either. No, we do not need to move all communications to in-person interactions, try to completely stay off the radar, or treat our colleagues with suspicion but we should not assume we are all on the same page. Talk more, not less in these complicated times.

Martin, any final thoughts before we go?

Martin: Dustin, as always, I appreciate you as a thought partner. The last thing I want to say is that we have to resist the urge to proactively comply out of fear. I'm lucky to be at a college where we are standing firm on our values, as we already believe everything we're doing is in compliance with federal and state law. Until there's a legal reason to change our practices, we're going to stay the course. In terms of the library, that means we're still going to purchase the resources our community needs. We're still going to celebrate the diversity of the people who use our library in our programming and displays. We're still going to post and share our values on our public website so that everyone knows what kind of library we aspire to be. I know that many of our colleagues are in very different situations and don't have the privileges we do to be able to resist, so some folks are going to have to make hard choices.

What's your final word on this, Dustin?

Dustin: I know we are privileged to address this topic and discuss possible responses from "safe," private institutions. However, I also know these strategies can be useful most places because we all have operational values. Libraries have values that change lives, and we should be working toward progress, not perfection. So, I will leave us with what the sticker that sits on my computer as I write says, "onward ever, backwards never!"

Notes

1. US Department of Education, "U.S. Department of Education Directs Schools to End Racial Preferences," press release, February 15, 2025, https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-directs-schools-end-racial-preferences.
2. E. L. Carter, H.R. 1161 - Red, White, and Blueland Act of 2025, introduced February 10, 2025, https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/1161/text.
3. S. Berenstain and J. Berenstain, *The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble at School* (Random House Books for Young Readers, 1987).

Megan York and Anna Clymer

"It's Just Like . . . a Lot."

Gen Z, New Student Orientations, and Information Overload

Information overload (IO) has become a pervasive concept in both librarianship and the broader media landscape of the 2020s. While there has been a depth of research regarding IO, there is no formally agreed-upon definition. One definition used in numerous publications by David Bawden, Clive Holtham, and Nigel Courtney is "information overload occurs when information received becomes a hindrance rather than a help when the information is potentially useful."[1] The newest generation arriving on campus, Gen Z, is a product of their socioeconomic and political environment. Although Gen Z's age range varies depending on the source, like other generations, Pew Research Center defines them as those born between 1997 and 2012.[2] This means that this generation will continue to be incoming first-year students for the next five-plus years. They have the lived experience of having information at their fingertips, where they constantly absorb information from various platforms and modalities. This new generation does not want to be given information; they want to actively participate in their learning and the information given to be relevant to their daily lives.[3] It is with this definition and Gen Z's participation in information seeking, plus their unique needs, that we decided to redesign the University of Arkansas University Libraries' approach to the campus-wide New Student Orientation (NSO).

Making excessive choices or having too much information can confuse and overwhelm people, ultimately leading to inadequate or no decisions. In addition, young people have difficulty dealing with large quantities of information,[4] something that is rampant during NSO and certainly during a mass tabling session for students and their families, which can translate into communication overload and information anxiety. Mohamed A. Belabbes, Ian Ruthven, Yashar Moshfeghi, and Diane R. Pennington discuss how increasing information makes it more difficult to decide which information is relevant and which can be discarded, leading to poor decision-making.[5] In addition, Josephine B. Schmitt, Christina A. Debbelt, and Frank M. Schneider mention how, for IO to occur, the person must suffer the adverse effects of having too much information, leading to stress and feeling overwhelmed.[6] Gen Z students know it can be overwhelming to keep looking for information, but they cannot help themselves from going down the rabbit hole of all available information.[7,8] Many have determined that more information equals better information; this might be attributed to the younger generation not being as likely to trust the quality of information they find online.[9] Thus they continue to seek out the "correct" information but are unsure when they have arrived at a defining answer.

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To minimize the impact of IO on our incoming students, the Outreach Working Group at decided to take a whole-person approach when revamping the information and swag provided at the tabling session for NSO to better engage with students and their families, with emphasis on the incoming student. When conceptualizing their needs, the whole-person approach focuses on the whole person, sociocultural and socioeconomic factors, and people's deep and multilayered identities.[10] Many in the library have started adopting this approach regarding outreach, engagement, and organizational development. The whole-person approach was particularly influential for NSO because, considering the uniqueness of the new generation, their needs and wants informed our decision-making process.

Families/Parents LibGuide QR code, examples of 3D printed items, "Choose Your Own Adventure" game, and bookmarks with Freshman LibGuide QR code. Photo Courtesy of Megan York.

Supporting Students During NSO

The Outreach Working Group prioritized less information push and more connection with students and their families. To accomplish this, we devised a plan to reframe the library's involvement as outreach with less focus on instruction. Borrowing from management philosophy, we opted for a "just in time" model for information. This model focused on only providing the information needed at a specific moment in time. For NSO, this meant delivering only what information new students need to successfully transition to college.[11] The working group felt it was essential to maintain a presence at NSO but wanted to refocus the library's message. NSO creates a unique space for librarians to reach new students less formally in a way that may also be less intimidating.[12] We discussed priority information and how to communicate it to students best while considering IO and the potential for communication overload. Previously, library messaging included research resources and information about individual subject librarians. In the planning sessions for NSO, the working group decided that this approach provided too much information that was irrelevant to students at that time.

The university libraries are uniquely positioned to provide both social and academic support. To highlight this support, the new messaging focused less on content and more on connection, which is essential as most incoming first-year students have had disrupted learning experiences due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nicknamed "Gen P," these students are reportedly undersocialized, academically unprepared, and worried about being unprepared for college more than in previous classes.[13] Students who began high school during the pandemic face unique challenges and require tailored services considering their education experience. The national average ACT score is the lowest in 30 years at 19.5, while average high school GPAs have risen, leaving many questioning if students are ready for college and how universities can gauge the additional support needed to ensure student success.[14] According to ACT survey results published in 2023, many students entering college are experiencing self-doubts about whether they are prepared for college, and survey respondents indicated

their concern about motivation, readiness, and success.[15] Colleen Flaherty describes these new students as needing "a less-is-more approach, one in which connection and community norms and values are stressed over quantities of information that could easily overwhelm."[16]

Kim Larsen, undergraduate engagement librarian, and Bekah Olson, engagement and instruction graduate assistant, at an example of the NSO table. Photo Courtesy of Megan York.

Thus the Outreach Working Group condensed the new messaging to the top five resources that freshmen need to know and will likely use in their first year regarding the libraries. Taking into consideration that Mullins Library is undergoing a significant renovation, we highlighted our variety of study spaces on our currently open floors, both for solo or group study; virtual chat help with real people; stress-relief activities during finals such as therapy dogs, friendship bracelets, zine-making, coloring, and button-making; Razorback Researcher workshops; and the addition of new innovative spaces and technologies once our renovation is complete with a few examples for them to look at, such as 3D-printed Greek letters and a campus map. Anecdotally, we noticed in previous years that families would be the most attracted to our table, as they liked to reminisce about their time on campus or that they used the library a lot while they were students at their respective universities. To ensure that family members still felt included, we created a QR code that led families to the new LibGuide "Libraries Information for Families."[17] The LibGuide compiled pertinent information from the most frequently asked questions we received from families during previous orientations, helping family members better support their students.

Another approach the Outreach Working Group took to minimize IO at NSO was reducing library swag. At previous NSO sessions, it was noted that swag mainly went to family members and not students. Our previous swag included pens, pencils, notepads, brochures, pamphlets, handouts, highlighters, and sometimes stickers. There were many options; they either went home with family members or were in students' bags and never seen again. To limit waste and prioritize connection, our group designed bookmarks with relevant information for new students and a QR code to a freshly updated "Freshman Resources" LibGuide.[18] The information we wanted students to know was irrelevant at the time of NSO, so we made it passively accessible rather than throwing it all at students as they visited our table. By posting—not pushing—information, students can choose when to access it.

Recognizing that students at NSO value choices and autonomy over a rigidly structured experience,[19] the Outreach Working Group made additional changes to the university libraries' participation in NSO. To prioritize engagement and independence, the university libraries' table consisted of a large screen with rotating images of library staff and events to provide a human connection, a "Choose Your Own Adventure" book recommendation activity to promote the student-led book club supported by the university libraries, which would give students a recommendation based on a series of "this or that"-type questions for a book that had been read previously in Razorbook Club. Additionally, there were examples

of 3D-printed objects to build excitement for the makerspace opening in the fall, as well as flyers with the QR codes for our LibGuides for new students and families. The working group also conducted a short volunteer training session for library employees staffing the table to ensure everyone was aware of the new messaging for our participation in NSO, talking points for them to use to engage people, as well as instructions on how to report the counts, what would be at the table, and a mechanism for reaching out to the Outreach Working Group if problems should arise, such as inability to make their shift or technical issues. This revamped approach ensured that the libraries' presence at NSO was meaningful, engaging, and less overwhelming, fostering a positive first impression and establishing a supportive connection with new students and their families.

Assessment

Another change for this NSO was an intentional effort to assess our reach and determine whether our participation in the event met our stated goals and provided a satisfactory return on the investment of our time. As mentioned, the main goal was to connect with students and introduce them to the library without overwhelming them with information. To measure our impact, we assessed both the number of people reached during the event and library volunteers' feedback on the changes to the approach. To count table visitors, we purchased a clicker to track the number of "participants," defined during our volunteer training as "any person who engages with us or our table by talking, listening, taking something with our logo or QR code, or completing our activity." Establishing this definition was necessary to ensure volunteers were tracking meaningful engagements.

We also held a debrief meeting with volunteers to gather feedback about the new approach. In general, feedback about the table and new approach was positive. Volunteers appreciated having two pitches to give students: the "Choose Your Own Adventure" PowerPoint activity and the discussion about the 3D-printed objects. One volunteer noted that the bookmarks were easy to hand to students even if they did not want to stop by the table to chat. The volunteers also offered valuable feedback and suggestions to improve our participation in NSO next year, such as using a tablet instead of a laptop or adding a QR code to complete the activity on a personal device. Another idea proposed was to add open-ended prompts to the slide show, such as "Ask us about . . ." with suggestions like 3D printers, sewing machines, or other library resources. We felt the feedback from the volunteer session was incredibly valuable. In the future, we will continue to track engagements by counting table visitors and debriefing with volunteers to ensure our participation in NSO is meaningful and worthwhile.

Conclusion

After tallying the participant total, we ended with more interactions than the previous year. In 2023, the library recorded 1,014 visits to the table at NSO, and in 2024, the library recorded 1,428 people. This evidence proves that the pared-down approach to providing information did not negatively impact our engagement. We believe that the attempt at paring down swag and information to focus on creating meaningful connections with students and their families was worthwhile. We continued this approach with other outreach events on campus throughout the fall semester, such as A-week (a week-long university program held before classes start designed to help incoming first-year students transition to campus)

and other college-specific events.[20] Thus we will continue to provide intentional information that meets the needs of our students in the moment, especially in campus-wide outreach events.

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M. Khoiri, Suyono, and Titik Harsiati

Unlocking Minds

The Nexus of Reading Literacy and Cognitive Strategies in Educational Advancement

Reading literacy plays a pivotal role in shaping academic achievements and personal growth.[1] It functions as a cornerstone skill that not only facilitates the acquisition of knowledge but also enables individuals to make sense of the multifaceted aspects of contemporary society. When complemented by cognitive strategies, reading literacy assumes a transformative role in educational progress. This article delves into the interconnection between reading literacy and cognitive strategies, shedding light on their profound impact on learning outcomes and cognitive development. Through an exploration of a case study conducted at the University of Madura's library, we aim to elucidate the tangible benefits of integrating these concepts into educational practices.

At its core, reading literacy empowers individuals to comprehend, interpret, and critically engage with written texts.[2] Beyond mere decoding of words, reading literacy entails the ability to extract meaning, analyze information, and synthesize knowledge.[3] It serves as a fundamental skill set that transcends disciplinary boundaries and equips individuals with the tools necessary for intellectual inquiry and discourse. When augmented by cognitive strategies such as previewing texts, monitoring comprehension, and employing inferential reasoning, reading literacy assumes a more dynamic and enriching dimension. These cognitive strategies enable readers to approach texts systematically, activate prior knowledge, and make connections between ideas, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention.

The University of Madura's library exemplifies the symbiotic relationship between reading literacy and cognitive strategies in education. Initiatives such as the Reading Literacy Enhancement Program (RLEP) empower students to cultivate effective reading skills and strategies. By providing access to a wide range of reading resources and hosting workshops on cognitive techniques, the library promotes a culture of reading and critical inquiry. Collaborations with faculty ensure that reading literacy and cognitive strategies are integrated into the curriculum, enhancing the learning experience and fostering intellectual growth, thus illustrating the transformative potential of these elements in educational advancement.

The Importance of Reading Literacy

Reading literacy is not confined to the mechanical act of decoding words; it entails a multifaceted set of skills that are essential for navigating the complexities of the modern world.[4] Beyond simply recognizing letters and sounds, reading literacy involves the capacity to understand, evaluate, and integrate information from written materials. In our daily lives,

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reading literacy plays a crucial role in myriad tasks, from understanding instructional materials to navigating online information. Whether it's reading a newspaper, following instructions for a new recipe, or deciphering a scholarly article, proficiency in reading literacy is indispensable for success in various facets of life.

Extensive research consistently underscores the profound correlation between reading proficiency and academic achievement.[5] Students with robust reading literacy skills excel in various subjects, demonstrating deeper content comprehension, critical thinking, and effective communication. Proficient readers not only understand complex texts but also critically evaluate arguments and articulate their thoughts clearly, positioning them for academic success and global competitiveness.

The benefits of reading literacy extend beyond academics, impacting personal development and lifelong learning. Individuals with strong reading skills can access a broad range of knowledge from diverse sources and make informed decisions. Fostering reading literacy from an early age cultivates a lifelong habit of learning and intellectual growth, enriching individuals' lives and enabling them to thrive in a constantly evolving society.

Cognitive Strategies in Reading Literacy Instruction

Cognitive strategies are essential for reading comprehension, enabling readers to extract meaning and construct knowledge from texts.[6] These strategies involve various mental processes that actively engage readers, such as previewing texts to gain an overview of content and structure. By doing so, readers create a framework for understanding and anticipating key ideas. Another important strategy is monitoring comprehension, where readers assess their understanding while reading, allowing them to identify difficulties and apply appropriate methods to enhance comprehension. Additionally, leveraging context and inference helps readers derive meaning through contextual clues and reasoning.

Educators play a critical role in developing students' cognitive strategies by explicitly teaching these techniques and providing opportunities for practice.[7] Through scaffolded instruction, educators gradually release responsibility to students, enabling them to apply cognitive strategies independently. By integrating these strategies into the curriculum across various subjects, students can reinforce and apply their skills in multiple contexts, fostering independent and proficient reading habits.

Beyond reading comprehension, cognitive strategies are valuable in other areas of academic and cognitive development, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making. Equipping students with these strategies prepares them to navigate complex tasks with confidence, contributing to lifelong learning and success.[8] Integrating cognitive strategies into instructional practices not only enhances students' academic skills but also supports their holistic personal and intellectual growth.

Implementing Cognitive Strategies in Reading Instruction: A Case Study at the University of Madura Library

At the University of Madura's library, reading literacy and cognitive strategies are deeply ingrained in the educational landscape, enriching the learning experience for students.[9] Through a concerted effort of targeted interventions and collaborative initiatives, the library serves as a hub for fostering effective reading skills and strategies among students. One noteworthy initiative spearheaded by the library is the RLEP. This program is designed

to provide students with tailored workshops and resources aimed at enhancing their reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities. By offering a range of interactive workshops and access to supplementary materials, the RLEP equips students with the necessary tools to navigate complex texts and engage critically with academic content.

The University of Madura's library is instrumental in promoting a reading culture and intellectual curiosity among its students. By working closely with faculty, the library integrates cognitive strategies into the curriculum, helping students develop critical academic skills. These programs ensure that students are well-prepared for academic success and lifelong learning. Beyond providing access to resources, the library plays an active role in fostering students' intellectual development, emphasizing critical thinking skills crucial for their future careers. Through its innovative initiatives, the library reinforces its commitment to supporting students throughout their academic journey.

The library's programs aim to cultivate well-rounded individuals capable of addressing modern challenges with advanced reading comprehension and analytical skills. By collaborating with faculty, the library tailors its resources to meet students' academic needs, offering workshops that position reading as a tool for problem-solving. This well-rounded approach provides students with the cognitive strategies they need to succeed in multiple disciplines. The library encourages students to actively engage with information, fostering critical thinking and independent learning habits. Ultimately, it lays the groundwork for students to confidently navigate the challenges of the modern world.

The RLEP focuses on improving students' reading comprehension through cognitive strategies. Techniques like previewing, annotating, and summarizing help students process complex academic materials more effectively. These strategies enable students to extract and organize key details from texts, improving both their comprehension and retention. Through participation in these activities, students develop their critical thinking abilities, which are essential for achieving academic success. The program thus fosters a deeper understanding of academic content.

The RLEP also offers workshops and resources that guide students in applying cognitive strategies to various reading tasks. These tools promote active reading, encouraging students to connect new information with their existing knowledge base. Such strategies help students synthesize information across different subjects, contributing to improved academic performance. The program's emphasis on active engagement with texts transforms reading into a purposeful and dynamic process. This prepares students to tackle future academic challenges with a robust set of cognitive skills that extend beyond the classroom.

The library also serves as a central academic resource hub, providing students with a wide range of reading materials that cater to both academic and personal interests. Its comprehensive collection includes scholarly articles, textbooks, and fiction, offering diverse resources that support various learning styles. This access to extensive reading materials fosters a culture of intellectual exploration and deep engagement with texts. Coupled with cognitive strategies, the library empowers students to approach academic materials confidently and apply their knowledge effectively. The library's role in enhancing academic performance is thus multifaceted and integral to students' success.

Collaboration between the library and faculty is key to integrating reading literacy and cognitive strategies within the academic curriculum. This partnership fosters interdisciplinary learning, with faculty employing innovative teaching methods to encourage deep textual

analysis and critical thinking. Students are taught to process and synthesize complex information, which directly contributes to improved academic outcomes. Through targeted instruction, students develop essential cognitive skills that support their intellectual growth. This collaborative environment between faculty and the library enhances the quality of education.

Moreover, the library promotes a culture of inquiry and lifelong learning by offering access to diverse perspectives and facilitating intellectual discourse. Initiatives such as book clubs, author talks, and scholarly seminars provide students with opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue and broaden their horizons. These programs encourage curiosity and critical thinking, preparing students to navigate complex global issues as informed, discerning citizens. By fostering such an intellectually stimulating environment, the University of Madura's library equips students with the skills necessary for both academic and societal contributions.

Through innovative initiatives like the RLEP, the University of Madura's library has established itself as a hub for advancing reading literacy and cognitive skills among students. This program not only helps students navigate complex academic texts but also equips them with essential cognitive strategies for critical thinking and problem-solving. The close collaboration between the library and faculty ensures that these strategies are seamlessly integrated into the curriculum, enhancing the overall learning experience. In this way, the library is instrumental in equipping students with the intellectual skills required to tackle both academic and professional challenges while also fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

Conclusion

The integration of reading literacy and cognitive strategies is paramount for enhancing academic achievement and personal growth, as evidenced by the findings from the University of Madura's library case study. Reading literacy transcends basic word recognition, enabling individuals to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize complex information, which is essential in today's multifaceted society. When coupled with cognitive strategies—such as previewing texts and monitoring comprehension—students engage more deeply with academic materials, improving both their retention and critical thinking skills. The RLEP exemplifies this integration by providing targeted workshops that empower students to navigate texts effectively and develop essential analytical abilities. Ultimately, the collaborative efforts between the library and faculty not only enrich the educational landscape but also foster a culture of inquiry and lifelong learning, equipping students with the skills necessary to excel in their academic and professional endeavors.

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Rachel Kray

Empowering Students Through Academic Resources

Strategies for Marketing Library Tools in a Rapidly Changing Educational Landscape

Library attendance has dropped by 50% over the past decade,[1] highlighting a significant shift in how students engage with and learn about academic resources. Academic librarians have always adapted to change, but today's pace—driven by advancements in technology and artificial intelligence—demands even quicker pivots. One key challenge is ensuring students have visibility of available tools, such as Libby or Kanopy, and can effectively use them while demonstrating responsible digital citizenship. They won't use tools if they don't know about them. Although technology has transformed the learning landscape, outreach strategies to students have largely remained stagnant.

Circumstances aren't all that different from the efforts to combat "fake news" in the mid-2010s. Librarians educated students on how to combat and vet sources while learning how to dig through a complex range of information. Since then, librarians' focus has expanded to educating students on new technologies, which is especially important since digital materials make up 98.4% of library circulation.[2]

Students often rely on a quick Google search for information, overlooking the wealth of curated, reliable resources their libraries offer. Bridging this gap requires proactive marketing to meet students where they are: on their smartphones, laptops, and digital platforms. Tools like QR codes, targeted workshops, student ambassadors, and tailored content can educate students about navigating new technologies and finding vetted information efficiently.

Promoting library resources isn't just about ensuring quick and easy access; it's about empowering students to use them effectively. By integrating outreach into student orientations, collaborating with organizations, and leveraging user-friendly technology, academic libraries will remain central to both academic and personal growth. Below are some strategies to ensure that students know about the resources that academic librarians have carefully selected and made available.

Marketing Effectively

One classic method to market resources on campus is using digital screens, printed materials, and signage across campus buildings—like the library, student center, or academic halls—to promote free access to ebooks and audiobooks. These visuals can quickly grab attention and remind students of the library's digital offerings.

It's especially impactful when marketing assets are shown at kick-off events, such as orientation, targeting new students to ensure they benefit throughout their entire college journey.

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This is important to avoid circumstances where students don't know what their school library offers until they've reached senior year.

And, to capture their attention by staying on-trend, include QR codes on marketing materials with messages like, "Confused by AI? Scan code to learn more." This offers students the opportunity to easily learn more about the latest buzzwords and can guide students from confusion and misinformation to seeking reliable, vetted information.

Another tactic, while it's more challenging to execute, is posting on social media—especially "BookTok," which is a subset of content on TikTok where users share videos about books. Academic librarians who have the resources and approval to post consistently can easily disseminate book recommendations, resources, and helpful tips through this channel.

The Ferriss Hodgett Library at Memorial University–Grenfell Campus and Musselman Library at Gettysburg College post consistently on their Tik Tok accounts, @librarygrenfell and @gburgcollibrary. The librarians use the social media platform to post about library collections, day-in-the-life content, tips for research, and general, fun content aligned with current trends. This is a great example of meeting students where they are with a variety of media platforms to share information.

Additionally, make sure faculty know what's available so they can champion and encourage students to make use of resources. Best practices include communicating with all the department heads, soliciting feedback from faculty on collections related to their coursework, and emailing visuals such as brochures and flyers.

A final, innovative approach to integrate library resources into students' daily habits is adopting campus ambassadors. The ambassadors are students who visit the library often and are encouraged to share how to use library resources with their peers. This word-of-mouth strategy causally advocates for the library and can be used to spread specific updates across campus.

Staying Relevant

A Google search is easy, but less reliable than the resources academic libraries offer. Emerging developments can help make access to academic libraries even easier, while maintaining reliability. Provide materials created by vetted publishers—industry-respected publishers—that can help students learn about these new technologies then implement those tools to help in their coursework and everyday lives.

Having credible information ready when a news event happens is getting easier as technology advances. Meet students where they are at, beyond brick-and-mortar, like smartphones and laptops. Resources need to be in the hands and on the screens of students when they need it quickly, meeting the demands for materials.

It can be daunting, but staying on top of collection updates is essential to remain relevant. Librarians' tools should be assembled into one system, saving time and effort by helping librarians avoid bouncing from resource to resource. Apps can ease the burden by helping curate collections on demand to meet the needs of students. If there is a sudden news event that occurs, librarians can immediately purchase and merchandise relevant resources.

Ensuring that this and other content are widely available is essential to helping students. Resources are available to librarians—particularly academic librarians—to promote cohesion between work with different vendors and systems while being available and discoverable.

Still, having a fluid collection, organized with the users in mind, only does so much if students don't know what's available. Get the information out early and highlight the library as not only a resource, but the holistic learning experience it offers.

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Writing for the Web Retreat

Updating a Library Website

It's probably safe to say that most library websites have at least a couple of pages that are slightly dated and wordy. In the 2022–23 academic year, the Northern Illinois University Libraries Website Committee decided to make some improvements to our website. Inspired by the idea of LibGuides parties,[1] the committee designed and hosted a retreat for committee members to engage in professional development, workshop activities, and dedicated time to make updates. What is exciting about website updates? Not a lot, but we think that the method of using a website re-writing retreat may be a useful tool for efficiently accomplishing this kind of task.

Northern Illinois University (NIU) is a public research university with approximately 15,000 students just west of Chicago. The Library Website Committee consists of six people from across departments and works on a couple of projects a year to improve public-facing web content. This complements the work of the Technology Support Services Team, who are responsible for maintenance of the website. In 2022–23, the committee improved several webpages that were hard to skim, unnecessarily wordy, and sometimes outdated. The goal of the project was to bring selected webpages in better compliance with plain text guidelines and best practices for writing for the web.

Planning the Retreat

The challenge with such a large project is that there are many stakeholders on various webpages, creating barriers to making large-scale changes. Therefore the committee devised a process to make changes. Before the retreat, committee members completed a survey where they reviewed the library website and suggested pages that needed revisions. Twenty-one pages were suggested as potential candidates for updating. Committee chairs then worked with library administration to identify stakeholders for each webpage. Each stakeholder was then contacted by a committee chair via email with background on the project and a request to make changes to the webpage(s) with an understanding that any revised text would be submitted to them for their approval before any permanent changes were made. A total of 17 webpages were included in the retreat, representing more than half of all webpages linked from the main menu of the library website at the time.

Once identified, the text of each webpage was copied into a word document in a central folder for all committee members to access. The committee chairs then used a table to assign

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each committee members 2–4 webpages to edit and 2–4 webpages to review after revisions had been made by other members. The table also later tracked if the stakeholder's approval for the edits had been received and if the page edits were ready for the web developer to implement.

The Retreat

The writing for the web retreat took 3.5-hours and included time for committee to engage in professional development, workshop exercises, and working time for the initial revisions to the 17 identified webpages slated for revisions. The event was broken down into three sessions, each with a specific goal. Each section began with a short video or two about a topic followed by a workshop exercise to improve a sample webpage based on the section's goals. We drew heavily from the Nielsen Norman Group's YouTube page[2] and website[3] to supplement our work. Finally, each section ended with time for committee members to edit their assigned webpages and incorporate what they had learned. The goal was that most of the editing would happen in the retreat with some asynchronous revisions afterwards. After the retreat, the committee chairs reviewed the edits and shared them with stakeholders for their approval. Once all the webpages had been approved by stakeholders, the website administrator implemented the changes on the NIU Library website.

Table 1. Writing for the Web Retreat Itinerary

Time	Activities
12:00–12:45	Lunch
12:45–1:00	Welcome and agenda

1:00–1:40	**Section 1 goal: Identify the audience for the webpage and what chunks of information exist on it.**
	• Presentation/Videos
	  • F-Pattern in Reading Digital Content[4]
	  • The Biggest Mistake in Writing for the Web[5]
	• Group Review of Courtesy Card webpage: Identify audience and chunks
	• Individual editing session 1

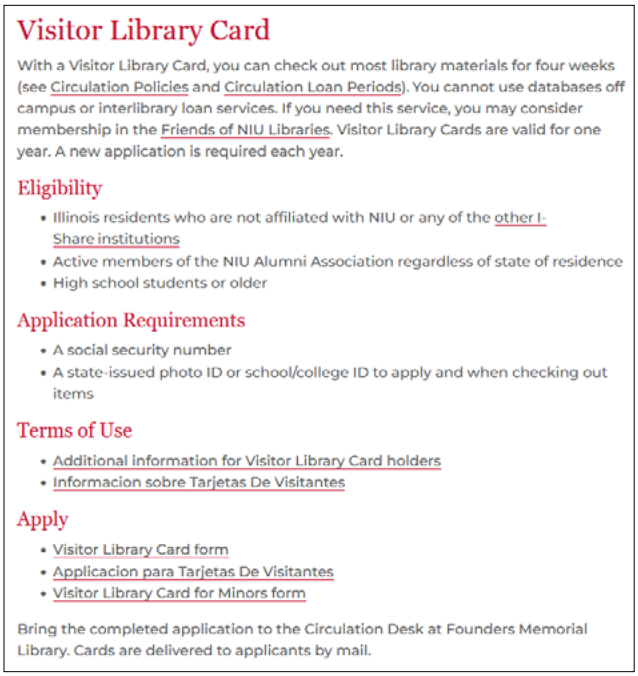
1:40–2:30	**Section 2 goal: re-write content in plain language with attention to headings, shorten content, bullet points**
	• Presentations/Videos:
	  • Plain Language for Everyone, Even Experts[6]
	  • Plain language presentation[7] and activities
	  • 4 Tips for Bulleted Lists in Digital Content[8]
	• Group review with Courtesy Card page for plain language
	• Individual editing session 2

2:30–2:45	Break

2:45–3:15	**Section 3 goal: revise pages for link names and library jargon**
	• Presentation/Videos
	  • Better Labels for Website Links[9]
	  • Writing Content for Generalists vs. Specialists[10]
	• Whiteboard Exercise: brainstorm library jargon and replacements
	• Individual Revising session

3:15–3:30	Closing

The first section of the retreat focused on identifying the audience for a webpage, the major chunks of information on it, and the impression we wanted to leave them with. Nielsen Norman Group recommends formatting and organizing webpages to complement the F-shape



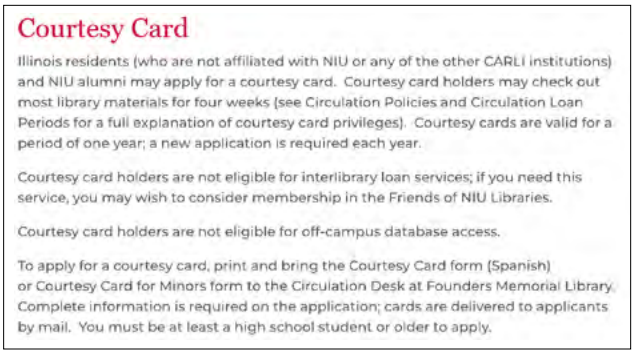


Figure 1. Before (above) and after (left) screenshots of the Visitor Library Card page

scanning pattern that readers often use. In this session, we practiced chunking content into smaller groups of information so that it is easier to skim and has a greater chance of being viewed by the reader.

The second section of the retreat focused on re-writing webpage content in plain language to make the message clear, direct, and concise. A usability study by the Nielsen Norman Group demonstrated that even proficient readers preferred succinct content.[11] We re-wrote section headings with action verbs or questions to make content more accessible and skimmable. In accordance with plain language principles, we condensed information, re-wrote at an 8-10th grade reading level, stayed in present tense, and used "we" and "you" pronouns when referring to the library and patrons. Summarizing information in bullet-point lists enhances readability while maintaining web accessibility, while formats like the table are easy to read but difficult for screen readers to process.

The third section of the retreat focused on meaningful link language and avoiding library jargon. Links to other material should always direct the user to what they are expecting by using succinct and informative link text instead of phrases like "click here" and "more." We brainstormed examples of library jargon on our website and decided on replacement terms.

Outcomes

The website retreat had a couple key outcomes. First, 17 webpages were updated, which represented more than half of the webpages linked from the main menu of the library homepage at that time. Our goals for the retreat were to reduce the number of words on pages and make them more scannable by chunking content with headings and more bullet points. Before revisions, the 17 webpages together had more than 6,000 words on them, and the committee was able to reduce this by 2,500. The committee also added at least 15 new headings to webpages and reformatted many paragraphs into bulleted lists. A sample before-and-after screenshot of one webpage below shows the addition of subheadings and bulleted lists and a word reduction by 15%.

Another major outcome of the retreat was increased library worker knowledge on best practices for writing for the web. Most committee members are stakeholders of library webpages in some way. By building up the committee's skills in writing for the web, the hope is that our webpages will improve as they continue to change in the future.

Conclusion

Editing library webpages for readability is a necessary project for libraries. Using a retreat format to make largescale changes that involve lots of stakeholders is a collaborative, educational, and timesaving practice. The process was manageable and efficient, resulting in a more accessible, skimmable, and usable website. Additionally, library workers who attended the retreat left with practical experience and stronger knowledge on writing for the web. The authors would like to extend our thanks to everyone on the Library Website Committee for their work on this project, to stakeholders across the library for allowing us to update their pages, and to our library administration for supporting the project.

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Michael Ridley

Explainable AI

An Agenda for Explainability Activism

If artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, is an opaque "black box," how are we able to trust it and make the technology accountable? Academic libraries are evaluating, providing, using, and increasingly building AI-based information tools and services. Typically, the underlying models for these intelligent systems are large language models (LLMs) based on generative AI techniques. While many of these systems have shown remarkable advances and advantages, the risks and deficiencies are also widely known and easily demonstrated.[1]

One path to trust and accountability is through explainability: the capacity of AI tools and services to explain their outcomes, recommendations, or decisions. Academic libraries need to adopt a multifaceted approach to explainability to ensure intelligent systems meet (and hopefully exceed) our expectations for authority, credibility, and accuracy.

Why Explainability?

Tania Lombrozo underscores the importance of explanations, noting that explanations "are more than a human preoccupation—they are central to our sense of understanding, and the currency in which we exchange beliefs."[2] To that end, libraries need to be *explainability activists*. Not passive, sceptical, or neutral but instead passionately on the frontlines of AI literacy, AI research and development, and technology policy. Explainability is a challenge for the AI community; it is an imperative for the library community.[3]

Explainable AI

"Explainable AI" (XAI) is the field of computer science "concerned with developing approaches to explain and make artificial systems understandable to human stakeholders."[4] Concerns about transparency and explanations have preoccupied AI since its earliest days.[5] The highly technical nature of XAI focuses on opaque AI algorithms using approaches such as feature engineering and model approximations.[6]

However, critics of XAI recognized a significant deficiency: "AI researchers are building explanatory agents for ourselves, rather than for the intended users . . . the inmates are running the asylum."[7] Taking user-centric approach, Upol Ehsan and Mark Riedl argue that "not everything that is important lies inside the black box of AI. Critical insights can lie outside it *because that's where the humans are.*"[8] This holistic focus is central to the subfield of XAI referred to as "human-centered explainable AI" (HCXAI). If explainability is to meet the values, principles, and policies central to academic libraries and the academy, adopting and promulgating the principles of HCXAI will be important.

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> puts the human at the center of technology design and develops a holistic understanding of "who" the human is. It considers the interplay of values, interpersonal dynamics, and socially situated nature of AI systems. In particular, we advocate for a reflective sociotechnical approach that incorporates both social and technical elements in our design space.[9]

HCXAI consists of specific techniques, practices, system design features, and policy recommendations.[10] These emphasize the importance of understanding the human context, including who is using the AI, when, and why. It considers the broader environment in which AI operates and how humans interact with intelligent systems. Crucially, HCXAI stresses the need for AI explanations to be actionable and contestable. Users should be able to act on the explanations and challenge them if necessary. Inherent in these characteristics is the priority HCXAI places on user reflection over acquiescence to the system.

Many of the HCXAI recommendations emphasize user empowerment. In supporting the idea of "explanatory systems not explanations,"[11] HCXAI recognizes that a single, static response from an intelligent system is insufficient. Users should be engaged in a clarifying dialogue with the system and provided with additional information (e.g., training data source, model objectives, counterfactuals) so that a user can participate in "active self-explanation." This would allow users to form their own conclusions (explanations) and contextualize the system behavior to their circumstances.

While most contemporary technology strives for a seamless, frictionless experience, HCXAI advocates for a "seamful" experience. Seamful system design makes the limitations and boundaries of the system visible to the user, not hidden or smoothed over. Seamful design is a form of explanation that allows users to understand system weaknesses and modulate their trust appropriately.

HCXAI advocates for the availability of AI performance metrics. Akin to nutritional labeling on products, these user-friendly metrics would alert users to system effectiveness "in the wild" (as opposed to lab tests). It would also facilitate comparisons of different systems with similar objectives.

Perhaps the most radical HCXAI proposal is that "explanatory systems" should be independent of the platforms or AI systems providing the explanations.[12] Explanatory capabilities embedded in specific systems or platforms are at risk of bias or worse, manipulation or coercion. Third-party explanatory systems based on explanation protocols "would push the power and decision making out to the ends of the network [i.e., where the users are] rather than keeping it centralized among a small group of very powerful companies."[13]

An Agenda for Explainability Activists

Advancing explainability requires action in five areas. Some of these occur at the institutional level (library and/or university), while others involve individual commitments.

1. First and foremost, libraries must continue and enhance AI literacy initiatives for library staff and their user communities. Critical information literacy that incorporates AI issues remains the most effective explainability instrument.

2. Institutions should encourage and support research and development in the explainable AI community. Basic XAI research in opening the black box is still a priority as new advances continually redefine the core building blocks of AI.

3. Libraries need to hold its vendors and information providers accountable for explainability. From startups to OpenAI, explainability should be a default in the tools and services they provide. Contracts, user agreements, acceptable use policies, and public persuasion are all opportunities to influence vendor and provider behavior.

4. Explainability must be entrenched in regulation. While the European Union AI Act is making progress, it falls short on robust explainability provisions.[14] Efforts in the US and Canada are even less successful. It is unimaginable that any other such powerful innovation would not receive legislated guardrails and consumer protection. The promulgation of regulatory oversight of AI that enshrines explainability requires advocacy from libraries, universities, professional organizations, and individual librarians.

5. Libraries need to adopt the principles of HCXAI. Whether through library policy and practice, co-development with AI system designers, or advocacy work with professional and civil society, HCXAI represents a way forward to explainability that is consistent with the values and principles that guide the academy.

Conclusion

Latanya Sweeney, director of the Public Interest Tech Lab at Harvard, notes that "technology designers are the new policymakers; we didn't elect them but their decisions determine the rules we live by."[15] Rebalancing this power dynamic is a central concern.

Invoking "explainability activism" is more than a glib phrase. Misinformation, disinformation, bias, hallucinations, deepfakes, privacy violations, and intellectual property protection are just some of the urgent challenges and risks posed by AI.[16] Advancing the trustworthiness and accountability of AI tools and services used by academic libraries requires clear directions and effective practices. Explainability through the principles of human-centered explainable AI (HCXAI) represents an action agenda for libraries that can yield positive impacts.

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Ruth Monnier, Matthew Noe, and Ella Gibson

AI in Academic Libraries, Part One

Concerns and Commodification

Academic Library Workers in Conversation is a *C&RL News* series focused on elevating the everyday conversations of library professionals. The wisdom of the watercooler has long been heralded, but this series hopes to go further by minimizing barriers to traditional publishing with an accessible format. Each of the topics in the series were proposed by the authors and they were given space to explore. This conversation is the first of two parts that will discuss generative AI and the many concerns that the authors already see playing out in their organizations.—*Dustin Fife, series editor*

Ruth Monnier: Thanks for joining me for this conversation from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains! Everyone seems to be talking about Generative AI—ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, etc.—whether it is newspaper articles touting the benefits of its usage or entire academic conferences devoted to it. Generative AI is everywhere these days—from classrooms to embedded in vendor products to Zoom rooms to social media scraping content. Most businesses and universities are jumping on the bandwagon to adopt and utilize this new and rapidly evolving technology. What do you think about generative AI usage within libraries and in society?

Matthew Noe: Y'all, the hype cycle is real and here it often feels like the choices are to get on board or lay down on the tracks to become part of a philosophy joke. That said, it isn't exactly universal across academia. High up in the administrative chain, there is a lot of buzz about "potential" and "we have to stay relevant," but that has come with a lack of clear guidelines, directions, and requirements, leaving each school, department, really, to make its own choices. The main tool adopted at my workplace so far has been ChatGPT, specifically OpenAI ChatGPT Edu, which IT is providing access to and support for. Others, such as DynaAI—an optional add-on for Dynamedex—are in the works.

As for what I think about this technology . . . I've never been called a Luddite more often in my life, but it is a badge I am proud to be wearing right now. Why is that? Well, despite the common usage of the term to indicate "backward" feelings toward technology, the Luddites were less concerned about technology itself than with the *ownership* of that technology and the *power* it imparted. Rather than sitting idle while their jobs were automated, all for the benefit of factory owners, they fought back—through community building, education, and, yes, the occasional destruction of property. (If you'd like to learn more about this, I highly recommend Brian Merchant's *Blood in the Machine*.[1])

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Ruth: Matthew, I agree there is a lack of universal guidelines and practices for generative AI or even standardized at institutions and in higher education. When guidelines exist, they seem to be focused on student usage only (i.e., syllabi language) but no one else's usage. Generative AI disclosure language should be provided to students, too! Honestly, I am a little shocked that there haven't been more liability lawsuits or lawsuits[2] about HIPPA and FERPA violations with generative AI usage yet. Definitely feels like we are trying to build a concept of a plane while we are flying.

Ella Gibson: Ruth, it's been really interesting to see how quickly people want to adopt and use generative AI—particularly within the library. At my institution, library faculty and staff are actually testing out Copilot to see how to integrate it into our workflows and what that could look like in the future. Weirdly, it doesn't work with the desktop version of anything I have currently. Which I think speaks to some of the ways this technology is still developing and isn't really fully understood or integrated.

Ruth: Ella, I agree it is weird how fast universities, corporations, and individuals have pushed for the adoption and usage of generative AI, especially in the context of the rhetoric about "how bad" social media and cellphones are within a K-12 environment. What makes this technology unique or special that we as a society feel the immediate need to use and adopt it compared to other previous technologies? To be fair, there have been minor societal push backs, e.g., Taylor Swift deepfake in early 2024, the 2024 Olympics commercial about Gemini writing the letter to the athlete for the little girl, and the initial roll out of Google glasses. However, beyond those minor pushes, it seems that generative AI is baked into most products, from Grammarly to LinkedIn to Microsoft Office to Adobe to iPhone 16, already without users having any option to opt-in to using generative AI or their data being used for generative AI.

Matthew: Ruth, you've hit the nail on the head with some of my worries about the rapid embeddedness of this technology. The risks of deepfakes seem to be readily accepted by mainstream discussions, but the other ethical problems with GenAI—and there are an abundance of them—continue to receive far less attention. For me, both personally and professionally, the environmental costs of this technology are alarming and lead me to question how we can possibly accept it as a new normal. Particularly in light of our own professional organizations, and many of our institutions (like mine), making pledges to value sustainability and reduce consumption. While exact numbers for both water and electricity are hard to come by (the companies aren't exactly forthcoming and regulators haven't forced the issue—yet), researchers from UC Riverside estimate that for each 100-word email generated by ChatGPT-4, it costs a bottle of water (519 milliliters) and the electricity required to power 14 LED light bulbs for an hour (0.14 kilowatt-hours).[3] When you take into account how many emails people send in a day, how often these tools (fail to) get it right the first time, and that this is *just for email*, the numbers get large, quickly.

Is there a particular concern that is foremost in your minds?

Ruth: The rough estimates about energy usage are scary, Matthew. I think if generative AI had less energy usage, the companies would be out in the street telling us. Also, I find it interesting how many individuals are unaware of the environmental costs while companies are buying nuclear energy plants for generative AI usage.

Matthew: This is part of the worry environmentalists have had for decades, too. We are finally seeing gains in renewable energy generation, but are immediately using more energy, making it harder to turn off nonrenewables.

Ella: I think it's scarier that library vendors are sending associates to campuses to talk about their AI products, and when you ask them about the environmental costs, they aren't really sure how to approach it. There were a handful of questions asked recently during a presentation about the environmental costs, and while the representative was definitely newer, they were trying to sell us on this product and its great use in the library. But if this is a genuine concern for the library, and the campus promotes itself as "green," then you should probably be able to answer questions about that.

Ruth: Matthew, you asked what concern is at the front of my mind, and the problem is all of them. The harms of generative AI are intersected with so many elements of society. I guess, the more urgent concerns are the ones with the longest, continuous harm such as sustainability, which you mentioned, decrease of human interactions, and the power we are giving to these technology companies for a half-created product without any regulations in the interest of "Innovation!" Technology companies are actively blunting individuals' ability to reason and think. Some students don't understand the difference between ChatGPT and a Google search. If you don't have a foundational understanding of the world or a content area, you don't know that what generative AI produces can often be wrong. Its results simply sound right.

Matthew: I've even had people here discuss using ChatGPT to self-diagnose a health problem. Something we tell people not to even use Google for, and that was *before* misinformed AI-summaries.

Ruth: With generative AI, deepfakes and easy reproduction of Name-Image-Likeness (NIL), someone could be framed or scammed and the ease of misinformation and malicious information spreads even more easily. Character.ai[4] and similar chatbots highlight how generative AI can be harmful to individuals and others. Students and individuals don't realize how much data they are putting into generative AI and how much of their privacy *and the privacy of others* that they are giving up into the models, especially the free models. Without much needed statutes and heavily enforced regulation, generative AI is the death knell of privacy because if anything was ever captured of you, you cannot stop the models or other people's usage of your NIL.

Ella: Privacy is a huge concern, and students especially aren't prepared to understand it. They haven't been taught about the permanence of things that they share and post. And they don't fully understand how these things can follow them around for the rest of their lives either. Because of the way we talk about the internet and "the cloud," there's often a transient nature to what people post online versus the reality of the potential impacts—either socially or materially. This is particularly true for young adults, so primarily thinking about undergraduate students, this means that they aren't psychologically there yet—their brain development is still ongoing and they don't know all the implications of their choices today. To me, this is an issue because not only are we leaving students in a vulnerable spot, but it's something that the population at large doesn't seem to be very knowledgeable about either.

Ruth: Great point, Ella. If the precedent of social media and government regulation—it took Instagram over 14 years for the 13-year-old profile setting—is anything to go by, we cannot and should not expect that the technology companies and generative AI will regulate

themselves or think of the common good while developing their new models. Furthermore, the US has a federal government that seems primed to oppose any sort of regulation, which raises a whole host of concerns. One example, how are you or anyone else to challenge a decision that was made by generative AI as these tools are proprietary black boxes? Yet there are government agencies that are using generative AI to make decisions about court claims[5] in the name of efficiency.

Matthew: Ruth, that "black box" piece is such a huge concern! How can we advocate for the use of this technology in research when there is no way to replicate its findings? We can't even promise that if we provide a prompt, you will get the same output!

Ruth: It can be argued that generative AI was built on copyrighted materials and intellectual property theft. Not to mention, the literal cases of child abuse used to train the models.[6] Hence, all the lawsuits.[7] Yet the companies will claim if it is on the web "it is fair use"; but we have seen individuals laid off[8] and individual creators' incomes decreased.[9] If the technology companies win the lawsuits, intellectual property and copyright as we know it will be completely changed and precedent will no longer matter. It seems that the power is in the hands of the technology companies and not individual members of society. In other words, "tech bros" are becoming tech oligarchs.

Matthew: Ruth, that "tech oligarchs" piece is such a cause for concern and should keep our profession up at night. And it is almost certainly by design, despite all the claims that this technology is "democratizing," which, even if we weren't *already* seeing a shift to subscription-based access to the tools, was never true. I rather liked the way Ali Alkhabit put it recently: "AI is an ideological project to shift authority and autonomy away from individuals, towards centralized structures of power. Projects that claim to 'democratize' AI routinely conflate 'democratization' with 'commodification'."[10] Now, as library professionals, we have to help find an intentional way forward that focuses on ethics and not acquiescing to technological oligarchies, but much more on that in part 2, coming up in the May issue.

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Federal Trade Commission. *Access:* https://www.ftc.gov/.

Established in 1914, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is an independent federal agency with a mission of "protecting the public from deceptive or unfair business practices and from unfair methods of competition through law enforcement, advocacy, research, and education." The FTC site is a hub for information related to consumer protection and competition, with a slimmer Spanish language option.

Due to the many entities under the FTC, the site covers a lot of ground. Its organization revolves around actions in three categories: "Enforcement," "Policy," and "Advice and Guidance." There are also "News and Events" and an "About the FTC" sections. "About the FTC" gives the agency's history, mission, links to bureaus and offices, and an organizational chart. It's an excellent resource for those learning about government functions, civic participation, and history. Each of the "Enforcement," "Policy," and "Advice and Guidance" sections supplies bulleted lists of associated actions. The "Enforcement" and "Policy" sections assume some subject familiarity and have many subsections. The site makes up for learning curves with plenty of introductory and contextualizing information. The "Advice and Guidance" is more novice-friendly and similar to a robust FAQ section.

The site has a simple search box with limited filtering options. While the search results include legal content, the FTC advises users looking for legal information to search its FTC Legal Library. The FTC Legal Library is not available in Spanish. The FTC Legal Library contains cases, proceedings, statutes, HSR formal and informal interpretations, and other types of records, with quick links to its most sought-after document types. The FTC Legal Library has more robust search filters—record type, mission, type of action, federal court, industry, case status, enforcement types, as well as the option to search by matter number, civil action number, or by date range.

Overall, the FTC site is an excellent resource for students, researchers, and laypeople looking for information on the agency's functionality, its place in the US legal system, legal documents related to consumer protection and competition in the marketplace, the latest scams, or to report fraud. The site is a must for students and faculty studying and teaching business, economics, law, and political science.—*Maria Planansky, Alfred University, planansky@alfred.edu*

Gender Data Portal. *Access:* https://genderdata.worldbank.org/.

The World Bank's Gender Data Portal is a valuable and important resource for worldwide data regarding sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics. Some countries have more available data than others. On the topic of "Population," data typically goes back to 1960 for all countries. For other topics, the data hasn't been collected for as long and availability varies by country. The data can be downloaded as a CSV file, which can be opened in Microsoft Excel or imported into software applications like R, Python, or Stata. The charts and visualization can be downloaded as PNG files. Data can also be accessed through APIs.

The Gender Data Portal is a trusted and well-established resource for data and statistics. It collects data on different topics through the years as the organization responds to changing data needs. World Bank funding may be impacted if the current US administration

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continues to implement Project 2025, which calls for the US to withdraw and stop payments supporting World Bank. Alternative data sources like the OECD Gender Data Portal, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics World Inequality Database on Education by Gender, and the WHO Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health Data Portal could also be impacted by withdrawal of support by the United States. The Gender Data Portal does include a list of other providers of gender data portals under the "Resources" menu, but World Bank Gender Data Portal is the most comprehensive collection of data indicators from countries all over the world.

The website itself is easy to navigate and logically organized. Users can navigate the data by economy, topic, or indicator. The site even includes links to "Data Courses" under the "Resources" menu for users wanting to learn more about data literacy.

In short, Gender Data Portal is a rich resource for gender statistics that is appropriate for college undergraduates, graduate students, researchers, and practitioners in areas such as sociology, business, economics, political science, and interdisciplinary areas like women and gender studies.—*Kristen Peters, Wittenberg University, petersk@wittenberg.edu*

National Low Income Housing Coalition. *Access:* https://nlihc.org/.

The lack of low-income housing is a national concern. Many full-time minimum wage workers cannot afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment, much less buy a home. Library patrons looking for information on this issue can be referred to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) website. The NHILC was founded in 1974 by Cushing N. Dolbeare, a former member of the President's Commission on Housing, and seeks to preserve federally assisted housing while expanding the supply of low-income housing. Among the events sponsored by the NLIHC is their annual Housing Policy Forum, which brings together community advocates, policy experts, and affordable housing advocates. The coalition's annual reports (2015–2023), retrievable from the "About Us" link on the homepage, highlights its work. The NLIHC also publishes *Tenant Talk*, a magazine for and by residents of publicly assisted housing.

Researchers can find an overview of affordable housing needs under the link "Housing Needs by State." Across California, for example, there is a shortage of rental homes available to extremely low-income (ELI) households, those whose incomes are at or below the federal poverty line or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Thus, in California, 1,282,835 (21%) renter households are considered ELI. The annual household income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home at HUD's Fair Market Rent is $98,545, while the average income limit for an ELI in the state is $33,520. The NLIHC estimates that California has a shortage of 972,082 affordable rental homes available to ELI renters. Compare these figures to those for the state of Mississippi, where the average income limit for a four-person ELI household is $27, 750 and the annual household income needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home at HUD's Fair Market Rent is $41,671. "Housing Needs by State" also provides graphs depicting "Affordable and Available Homes per 100 Renter Households" (based on ELI) and "Housing Burden by Income Group" (based on AMI).

In addition to data regarding the availability of low-income housing, the NLIHC provides information on issues such as housing-related tax credits, racial equity and fair housing, and housing vouchers. Researchers interested in public policy, sociology, and related areas, will find this site useful.—*Wendell G. Johnson, Northern Illinois University, wjohnso1@niu.edu*

Acquisitions

Tang Hon Cheung and his wife Soo Hoo Shee in Phoenix, Arizona, 1942

The Hoover Institution Library & Archives has acquired the papers of Tang Hon Cheung. Cheung was born in 1892 in the Taishan area near Kaiping, Guangdong Province, China. Despite the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which drastically restricted Chinese immigration to the United States, Tang settled in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1924, among a vibrant community of other Chinese immigrants. This collection, an epitome of Chinese immigration to the United States, features rarely seen photographs documenting the Tang family and Nationalist Chinese pilots who received training in Arizona, along with family correspondence and historical papers. These materials provide valuable supplements to Hoover's existing collections on the history of Chinese Americans such as the personal papers of Richard A. Cheu, Pardee Lowe, Renee Lym Robertson, Iris Chang, and Zhou Shilin.

The Hoover Institution has also acquired and will make available to the public the archive of the Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC), which was established to fulfill former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' intent to enable research on captured records with "complete openness and rigid adherence to academic freedom and integrity." The CRRC's mission was to facilitate the use of captured records to support research both within and outside the US government. The CRRC collection is comprised of digitized documents captured by the US military during combat operations, including Al-Qaeda and associated movements documents captured in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein regime documents captured in Iraq, and offers crucial insights into questions on national security, military strategy, and foreign relations between 1970 and 2003.

The University of Arizona (UA) Libraries Special Collections has acquired the archive of author, activist, and historian Lydia R. Otero. Born and raised in Tucson, Arizona, Associate Professor Emeritus Otero served as a faculty member in the Department of Mexican American Studies in the UA College of Social and Behavioral Sciences from 2003 to 2020. The donated collection includes materials from Alianza Hispano-Americana, a mutual aid society founded in 1894 in Tucson that offered low-cost life insurance, social activities, and other services to Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the southwest; interviews from

Otero's projects; professional and research files; and personal family materials and heirlooms. The Otero Papers are part of the Special Collections Borderlands and Arizona and Southwest collecting areas, which document the culture and history in both regions.

More than 60,000 pieces of archival material, including photographs, ledger books and other media make up a new library collection established in the name of Beaulieu Vineyard (BV) at the University of California (UC)-Davis. As part of the UC-Davis Library's world-class wine collections, the Beaulieu Vineyard Records will help researchers, students, wine writers, and historians better understand the impact of BV, its founders Georges and Fernande de Latour and famed enologist André Tchelistcheff on Napa Valley and the American wine industry. It includes articles, photographs, and documents about prominent employees at BV, including André Tchelistcheff, Legh Knowles, Joseph Ponti, and Lorenzo and Aldo Fabbrini; historical background on vineyards and wines, including correspondence about altar wines made during Prohibition; advertising and promotional materials from the 1940s through the early 2000s; and more. The library is digitizing portions of the collection selected for historical and research value, enabling scholars and wine enthusiasts from around the world to explore the vineyard's rich history online.