

ARL Action Plan 2021–2022

August 26, 2020

Introduction

As our Association looks towards the plausible futures of research libraries and archives under uncertain conditions, we do so in an unprecedented context that requires all of us to be even more intentional about accelerating opportunities, and leaving behind policies and practices that no longer serve our vision and mission well.

This Association is bound by our collective commitment to advancing scholarship; by focusing on what we are best positioned to achieve at the intersection of public policy, institutional policy and practice, and the changes in research, teaching, and learning. In 2021–2022, we recognize the significant leadership challenges of a chaotic time and embrace the historic opportunities given the following phenomena:

- A pandemic that we believe will affect individuals and institutions through 2021 and have significant consequences for the following years
- Economic upheaval that will continue to shape the nature of our society, higher education, and research libraries and archives
- A heightened awareness of too long-existing systemic societal inequities and a renewed commitment to enduring social justice, particularly as it relates to racism and systems of oppression in our institutions and in ARL

Under these conditions research libraries and archives and this Association are even more attentive to the broader research and learning enterprise, and particularly to the dominant digital context.

2021–2022 Priorities

With the pandemic, the changing nature of research and society, and our universal commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all we do, the ARL Board of Directors agreed to five priorities that have served as our overarching goals since 2019. Our priorities are:

1. Advocate for public policies in support of our mission and shared objectives
2. Catalyze collective efforts to achieve enduring and barrier-free access to information
3. Create diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible work environments, services, and collections
4. Provide data and analytics on research libraries' practices, effectiveness, and impact
5. Shape and inform leadership practice throughout research libraries and archives

The Association actively engages in collaboration with and in support of our partners, in Canada, the United States, and internationally, who share our mission. Our partners represent key stakeholders in higher education, in the US federal government, in cultural heritage organizations, as well as in the full breadth of scholarship. These partnerships are paramount in achieving our shared aspirations.

2021–2022 Objectives

Our objectives reflect an intentional focus on convening, informing, shaping, and influencing outcomes that benefit our members, our partners, and the broader research and learning ecosystem. Each objective reflects the leadership work that ARL is best positioned to advance in collaboration with partners at this critical inflection point.

Our five objectives are:

1. Advocate and advance law and policy for balanced copyright that safeguards the interests of researchers and learners so libraries can share, lend, reformat, preserve, and acquire digital content with maximum digital affordances
2. Enhance partnerships within the greater research ecosystem in order to strengthen research libraries within the open-science-by-design framework and related open-scholarship initiatives
3. Advance sustainable and systemic change particularly as it relates to racism by recruiting, retaining, and advancing people of color and other underrepresented populations, as well as through programs, frameworks, and partnerships to build structural equity and inclusion
4. Implement a research agenda for the Association that enables research libraries to address impact and outcomes
5. Implement a strategy for leadership and organizational development through programming and events that develop library deans, directors, and staff to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the significant changes underway in research, teaching, and learning

And, ARL continues to focus on two core commitments on behalf of its members:

1. Engender a member experience in which all member representatives feel welcome and can participate in and benefit from the Association
2. Deepen and expand the understanding of the research library value and brand identity, particularly in terms of its impact in the research enterprise and more broadly

2021 Initiatives, Programs, and Services

ARL convenes, informs, shapes, and influences the research and learning ecosystem through thought leadership and shared experience, events and educational programs, representation at professional meetings, with public policy decision-makers, and in the media, through partnerships, and in developing and disseminating resources and tools.

With the dynamic and shifting role that libraries play in a time of uncertainty and opportunity, ARL's focus remains on leadership. In 2020 our planning surfaced the following leadership initiatives, programs, and services.

Objective 1

Advocate and advance law and policy for balanced copyright that safeguards the interests of researchers and learners so libraries can share, lend, reformat, preserve, and acquire digital/digitized content with maximum digital affordances

Leads: Advocacy and Public Policy Committee; Senior Director, Scholarship and Policy

The Association will focus on position papers, guidance, tools, and coalition building related to the United States and international digital information policy environment—specifically digital rights, digital resource sharing, and digital materials for persons with disabilities. We will continue to track, inform, and respond to changes in privacy, broadband access, freedom of expression, and government information.

Objective 2

Enhance partnerships within the greater research ecosystem in order to strengthen research libraries within the open-science-by-design framework and related open-scholarship initiatives

Leads: Scholars and Scholarship Committee; Senior Director, Scholarship and Policy

The Association will partner with higher education stakeholders and scholarly societies on position papers, recommendations, case studies, and guidance to increase the amount of open scholarship, particularly research data, and on providing access to for-profit sector data for research by scholars. Through the development of a collective-action framework for university publishing, ARL will build partnerships, and specifically make recommendations to advance racial equity in scholarship and assess the TOME pilot. With the need for sustainable infrastructure, ARL will facilitate member conversations and inform their decisions on value-based investing in infrastructure and scholarly resources.

Objective 3

Advance sustainable and systemic change particularly as it relates to racism by recruiting, retaining, and advancing people of color and other underrepresented populations, as well as through programs, frameworks, and partnerships to build structural equity and inclusion

Leads: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee; Senior Director, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ARL will offer thought leadership and shared learning opportunities and resources as part of leadership and organizational development pathways to diversity, equity, and inclusion, including completing our collaborative work on a racial equity competencies framework. We will deepen our long-term commitment to diverse populations throughout their careers—specifically for the Leadership and Career Development Program and Kaleidoscope Program scholars and fellows. Our intentional focus on structural inequity will focus on anti-racism and developing a framework to scaffold systemic change.

Objective 4

Implement a research agenda for the Association that enables research libraries to address impact and outcomes

Leads: Research and Analytics Committee; Senior Director, Research and Analytics

The Association will focus on evidence for senior decision-makers that captures and demonstrates impact, given the dynamic context in which research libraries are contributing and looking to contribute to scholarship (research and learning), including rethinking and revising the ARL Statistics. We will provide: a forum for data and practice sharing, member surveys and assessment tools to guide leadership decisions, and a new version of LibQUAL.

Objective 5

Implement a strategy for leadership and organizational development through programming and events that develop library deans, directors, and staff to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by the significant changes underway in research, teaching, and learning

Leads: ARL Academy Advisory Committee; Senior Director, Leadership and Organizational Development

ARL will deliver a digital-first leadership and organizational development strategy, focused on specific learning pathways for deans, directors, and staff during a time of significant disruption and opportunity. We will launch the new Leadership Fellows program for a diverse and inclusive cohort of senior leaders seeking more responsibility and we will pilot an institute for senior leaders

seeking to lead their teams even more effectively. If the grant is approved, we will work with our transatlantic colleagues to catalyze and sustain transformation of digital scholarship skills across research libraries and cultural institutions.

Two Core Commitments

Commitment 1

Engender a member experience in which all members feel welcome and can participate in and benefit from the Association

Leads: Member Engagement and Outreach Committee; Associate Director, Board and Member Relations; Senior Director, Leadership and Organizational Development

Members will engage virtually and, when safely and economically possible, in person, in Peer-to-Peer Confabs, two Association Meetings, and a Fall Forum, and have the opportunity to receive a 2021 Venture Fund award. New and interim member representatives, as well as new Association committee chairs, will be welcomed and provided with the information they need to fully engage. Member representatives will receive regular communication on Board decisions and actions, program opportunities and achievements, and updates on resources.

Commitment 2

Deepen and expand the understanding of the research library value and brand identity, particularly in terms of its impact in the research enterprise and in the learning environment

Leads: Executive Director; Senior Director, Communications

With an emphasis on the impact of research libraries and archives now and in the near future, ARL will convene members and partners on plausible futures to inform policies and practices and to establish trends to watch and report on over the next one to two years. ARL will develop position papers, op-eds, and material for social media (including video content) that map to the value and impact of research libraries, targeted for higher education associations that represent presidents, provosts, and vice presidents of research. We will provide our members with talking points and other aids to demonstrate the contribution research libraries and archives make broadly, and in their institutions.

Conclusion

This Action Plan reflects our leadership role during a time unlike any other we have known in our lifetimes. These initiatives, programs, and services are sharply focused on the challenges and opportunities that this collective of research libraries and archives across Canada and the United States consider essential given the known and unknowable context over the next two years. Through our work, we will identify where we need to push even harder, and even shift our attention, to achieve our vision for the role of research libraries and archives in advancing scholarship now, and for the future.