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Research

Examining Collection-Related Language within Academic Library Strategic Plans

A Thematic Analysis

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Though collections are often identified as a core component for academic libraries, studies show that shifting priorities have taken some attention away from the traditional aspects of collections (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2024; Dempsey, 2020; Rieger, 2019). Data from this thematic analysis of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) academic library strategic plans presented the variety of terms and language being used to describe collection-related activities. Though evidence shows that most ARL libraries still highlight collections, the way collections are referenced has broadened. Current framing of collections often places emphasis on services and user needs. This analysis draws attention to how collections are featured within strategic plans from some of the leading academic research libraries. This research is relevant for library strategic planning discussions and for those who are following trends of library collection practices.

Keywords: academic libraries; collection strategy; priorities; collection development; collection management; trends; thematic analysis; strategic planning

Introduction

Collections are a major aspect of academic libraries, so references to collections within the strategic planning process are to be expected. Within an examination of the Association of Research (ARL) Libraries, David Kohl (2009) stressed that collections, especially physical collections, have long been a dominant focus for the mission and identity of academic libraries. Academic library collection development has roots back to 1636 with the establishment of the Harvard College Library, and up until the 1950s, one of Harvard Libraries' goals was to collect and preserve everything (Kohl, 2003; Reiger, 2019). Over time, limitations with space and budget have shifted library collection development priorities toward the needs of their academic communities or carefully selected themes of interest. Though collections are still recognized as a central focus within academic libraries, strategic planning documentation contextualizes how collections are being situated. Strategic plans are developed to steer libraries toward their goals; this study questions how collections are being referenced for the development of goal planning among ARL academic libraries.

The overall narrative around collections has evolved over time. The 2024 ACRL Top Trends Report cited that one of their top trends for that year was “disrupting and reconceiving collection practices” (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2024, para. 16). Challenges to collection practices of the past often begin with setting goals within planning documentation. Some libraries may want to disrupt what is collected and others may want to examine what makes up a collection. Research by librarians like Dempsey et al. (2014) proposed changes to the way collections are perceived with their emphasis on an inside-out collection. The inside-out view insists that libraries need to value content that can be created from within their institution and disseminate these home-grown collections outward into the world. This vision has been adopted by some libraries who have focused their attention on services that can help enhance knowledge production within their spaces. Though libraries have expanded their definitions of collection-related work, Hanna Hallnäs (2024) urged libraries not to lose sight of their organizational identity. Libraries must confront how to maintain core identities with their collections while also considering evolving needs. There seems to be a delicate balance of preserving some key traditional collection practice identities while acknowledging that some new collection practices must be adopted to remain relevant.

This analysis shows how leading research libraries are highlighting collections in line with their planned actions. Some research proposed that library leadership has shifted some attention away from traditional collecting practices (Hulbert, 2023; Scherlen, Allen, & McAllister, 2019). With this backdrop of change, this paper seeks to uncover updated narratives and the way collection initiatives are now being framed within library strategy. Over time, academic libraries have had a decline in collection ownership and an increase in offsite and digital materials (Levine-Clark, 2014). Questions of whether this has influence over collecting practices or behaviors can begin to be explored by the way libraries frame their strategic directions. Thematic analysis of ARL strategic plans will provide a better understanding of the emphasis on collections and what collection-related activities are being highlighted.

Literature Review

Research about current trends and the future of academic libraries tends to focus on services or collections as a service. A 2022 Ithaka S+R US Library Survey found that “priorities continue to shift from collections to services” (Hulbert, 2023, p. 3). There are also several studies that called upon libraries to think of the collections as a service (Dempsey, 2020; Linden et al., 2018; Way, 2017). Libraries are often called upon to rethink their priorities. In his work, *The Atlas of New Librarianship*, David Lankes (2011) believed libraries should break away from ‘material-centered’ librarianship and start focusing more on human-centered assets like their librarians and their knowledge communities. These shifts in strategic priorities have changed the way collections are featured. For some, the term ‘collection’ is outdated. Dempsey et al. (2014) reviewed patterns of collection categories and found that trends in scholarly communication are changing the way researchers engage with the scholarly record. They found a need to alter the focus of libraries more toward their distinctive roles and services. Tom Kwanya (2023) called upon libraries to rebrand themselves as ‘knowledge centers,’ arguing that libraries should focus on valuable knowledge-related connections rather than research materials that are often no longer owned. As services rise to the forefront, it raises questions, such as: What is the place of collections in libraries? Is the term ‘collections’ still relevant to libraries? Do libraries still need collections for the sake of their identity?

Literature about collections and strategic planning either comments on new directions or specific aspects of collection development that require special attention. In an Ithaka S+R issue brief covering collections, Oya Rieger (2019) claimed, “a more intentional effort to scope the library collection and recognize its boundaries today will enable improved strategic engagement with priorities such as preservation, discovery, and user support” (p. 15). The scope of collections has changed, and collection-related initiatives often break away from using traditional terms like ‘collections.’ With a broader range of collection-related scholarly activities offered by libraries, there are efforts to be more specific. For example, libraries may prefer to reference collection-related outcomes, such as preservation and

scholarly communication. Shifts toward this type of referencing have been ongoing. In a 2015 study of the top trends of strategic plans, Laura Saunders (2015) called upon libraries to take a less traditional approach toward their planning and think about emerging areas. According to a 2023 survey of library deans and directors, top priorities included themes like research data management and student success; collections as a theme was ranked much lower (Hulbert, 2023). These types of shifts in strategic priorities are what some consider essential if libraries wish to remain relevant (Oyedokun, 2024). When the term ‘collections’ is mentioned within strategic planning, it may often be featured as secondary, embedded in the plan as part of a list of objectives. Thus, it becomes more difficult to track collection priorities, since there are so many new ways they are being referenced.

Literature shows evidence that traditional framing of collections within strategic priorities is fading. But this trend has critics. Edquist et al. (2022) stressed that users depend on collections and libraries should maintain distinction through collections. Saunders (2015) emphasized that collections deserve to hold a place of prominence if they are still of value to patrons. Hallnäs (2024) also underscored the need to respond to patrons, noting that many patrons perceive the library to be a space containing collections. With pressures to focus on emerging trends and the decreasing circulation numbers, library leaders are increasingly challenged on how to progress past the same agendas that were in place many years ago, but there is a careful balance (Sherlen et al., 2019). These studies caution that libraries must continue to insert collections within the central narrative of libraries. There seems to be some divisions in the research between how collections should be presented and prioritized.

Studies about strategic priorities and collections either tend to focus on the need to respond to changes or on reviewing how emerging trends are cropping up within library priorities. David Macaulay (2023) studied collections within Association of Research Libraries’ strategic plans but focused on connections with diversity language. Huang et al.’s (2023) study of international academic library strategic plans focused on how artificial intelligence was being integrated into planning and possible impacts on collecting. Focused studies like these do not address how collections are presented within a wider scope.

The broad theme of collections can be difficult to approach, as it is a wide umbrella that covers many areas. Studies that focus on upcoming trends of collections often highlight terms/themes, such as open access, digitization, discovery, preservation, and scholarly communication (Dempsey, 2020; Dempsey et al., 2014; Linden et al., 2018; Morrison, 2007; Soules, 2014). Although many of these terms tend to be collection-related, they can also be referenced within other library-related contexts. When libraries mention these themes within their plans without much reference to their collections, it is difficult to confirm whether it is mentioned within an instructional, service, or other context. The way collections are referenced is ever evolving: libraries may focus on modernizing and broadening their collection objectives. While this is understandable, this study emphasizes the value of ensuring that the collection components of a library plan are easily identified. It is important to highlight how libraries are thinking about collection-related work, so there is wide-spread awareness.

Methodology

Academic libraries that are ARL members (www.arl.org/list-of-arl-members) were used as the central source of data for this study. Strategic plan documentation data was gathered from ARL library websites during the summer of 2024. Plans were located by searching the open web for the library name and the term “strategic” or by searching the homepage under the ‘about’ section. Out of the 120 ARL academic libraries, 110 had publicly available plans that were considered recent enough to use (i.e., within the past eight years). Two plans pre-dating 2016 were excluded and eight plans that were not publicly discoverable through a web search. Please see Appendix 1 for plans that were included and Appendix 2 for excluded ones.

Thematic analysis guided the researcher to identify patterns embedded within the strategic planning text. Methods for this analysis included an investigation of specific collection terms, a qualitative review of the headers/section titles, and pattern coding of the text. Each of these methods presented data about the overarching recurring themes.

Dedoose, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft Word were used for thematic analysis of the strategic plan wording. Dedoose is qualitative cloud-based coding software that allows users to upload data and create a coding schema that can be analyzed with their reporting tools. Upon uploading strategic plan text and PDFs, it provided a stable source of textual data and a place to store all the collection-related coded themes. Institutional access and researcher familiarity of Dedoose made it a logical choice for analysis. Messages from the dean, the libraries' mission, their values, and information about the committee were omitted from the coding and analysis. When reviewing the collection-related objectives within all the plans, 32 codes were identified. Descriptive coding was used for the initial coding phase. The researcher created groups based on recognition of collection-related terms and themes, such as open access or preservation. For the second coding phase, pattern coding was used to consolidate the coded categories. Codes were created based on surrounding contextual clues and wording. Wording segments considered for analysis usually included terms, such as collections, collecting, resources, content, and/or materials, but context was also useful since collection-terms can be extensive. Context was important, because terms like discovery, open access, scholarly communications, access, preservation, digitization, and licensing tend to be associated with collections but can also relate to other work or meanings.

Microsoft Excel and Word were used for word frequency analysis. Word was used to gather word count information and the 'find' feature was used to gather counts of specific terms. The word count and analysis only included text from the strategic goals, directions, actions, and indicators. Searched terms included collect(ion), content, resources, and material. Plans from Canada that were written in French were translated using Google Translate. The combined count of the terms was summed, divided by the plan's total word count, and multiplied by 100 for the portion percentage. To simplify the data, percentages were grouped into four categories: not mentioned, under 1%, 1-2%, or above 2%. The word frequency analysis provided a measurable way to track the mention of traditional collection-related terms. Excel was used to track the number of times a term was mentioned within each plan and to calculate the percentage of representation based on the plan's word count. Columns were also used to track qualitative collection-related content within the headers/section titles of the plans. This qualitative analysis of the headers/section titles helped identify emphasized themes related to collections but not always labeled with "traditional" terms, such as discovery, digitization, preservation, and scholarly communication. The headers/section titles were also examined for their mention of the term collection. Overall, there were three layers of thematic analysis used to examine the way collection-related themes were presented in these strategic plans: qualitative text analysis of the plan overall, word frequency analysis of specific terms, and a qualitative analysis of headers/section titles.

Findings

Each of the plans have some type of activity or initiative that can be linked to collection-related activities, but collection-related themes vary between plans. Qualitative analysis highlighted recurring themes, such as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) topics and efforts to focus on resource access. The combination of thematic analysis methods helped discover which collection themes are emphasized and how often. Frequency analysis of the terms collect(ion), resources, materials, and content, provided a direct link for tracking collection themes. The frequency of the terms provides some commentary about the way libraries frame collection themes within their plans. Questions arise, such as: Are these types of collection terms being replaced by other terms? Or, are some libraries choosing to shift some of their focus toward other themes? Based on the qualitative findings of this study, expanding beyond these more traditional terms is important for tracking collection-related themes. Qualitative analysis focused on both the broad

plan as well as the headers/section titles. With targeted analysis of the headers/section titles, there were more opportunities to examine which collection-related themes are emphasized.

Collection Themes Identified from Text Analysis and Dedoose Coding

Broad coding of the 110 strategic plans resulted in 32 collection-related coded themes. These themes were identified by scanning through each plan and highlighting areas that seemed to involve an aspect of collection-related work. Groups were created in Dedoose based on the researcher’s understanding of the goals or aims of the highlighted text.

Table 1

Coded Collection-Related Themes & Excerpts Count (Sorted by Count)

| Collection Related Themes | Count |
|---|--------------|
| DEI | 115 |
| Access Improvement | 103 |
| Open Access & Open Scholarship | 83 |
| Digitization, Digital Collection Projects, Digital Preservation | 77 |
| Research Support | 61 |
| Preservation & Archival Collections | 56 |
| Discovery Optimization | 54 |
| Collective Collections & Partnerships | 50 |
| Special Collections | 48 |
| OER & Textbook Affordability | 41 |
| Distinct/Unique Collections | 40 |
| Stewardship & Sustaining/Enduring Collections | 40 |
| Shifting & Improving Collection Spaces | 36 |
| Promoting Collections & Event Planning | 32 |
| Assessment, Impact Measures, & Reporting | 28 |
| Curriculum Alignment & Instructional Support | 26 |
| Physical Collection Oversight (i.e., Storage, Management) | 25 |
| Growth & Expanding Collections | 24 |
| Community Engagement | 22 |
| Format Focus (i.e., E-Preferred) | 22 |
| Policy Development | 20 |
| Resource Services Management | 16 |
| Responsive/User-focused Collections | 16 |
| Financial Responsibility, Fund Seeking, Donors | 14 |
| Digital Scholarship | 11 |
| Personnel Growth & Expand Expertise | 11 |

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|--|----|
| Scholarly Communications | 11 |
| Institutional Knowledge Dissemination & Institutional Repositories | 8 |
| Licensing & Contracts | 8 |
| Data Focus | 7 |
| Global Connections & Foreign Language Materials | 7 |
| Reputation Development | 3 |

The top three coded themes taken from this text analysis reveals a focus on DEI, improving access, and open access/open scholarship. The top three themes are commonly found within many of the plans but not all. Although a coding excerpt count provides evidence of popular themes, there are not any themes that can be labeled as universal between every library studied. Every library had its unique priorities. For example, some focus on expanding while others worry about space; a few mention using collections for data gathering, and others do not reference data at all.

Availability of strategic plan versions influenced some of the results. Fuller versions of plans with high word counts were likely to have a higher rate of collection-related excerpts. For example, Harvard University has the second highest word count and the most collection-related coded excerpts. With the way this analysis was conducted, higher number of excerpts could drive up the code count of certain themes. Dedoose’s code application analysis presented the codes that are mentioned by the highest number of libraries. Codes that have the highest representation among the libraries analyzed include:

- Access Improvement (74 libraries)
- DEI-Mindset (68 libraries)
- Open Access & Open Scholarship (59 libraries)
- Research Support (49 libraries)
- Discovery Optimization (47 libraries)
- Digitization, Digital Collection Projects, & Digital Preservation (44 libraries)
- Preservation & Archival Collections (42 libraries)

Data shows that the most universal collection-related theme among libraries is access improvement, mentioned by 67% of libraries. Reviewing the count of libraries, rather than the count of excerpts, slightly reorders some of the most prominent themes. Count of coded excerpts shows how some institutions emphasize valued initiatives by bringing them up repeatedly within their plan.

Overall, the text analysis of the plans supports knowledge about dominant collection-related themes and how themes can vary between libraries. The code application analysis shows that there are not any universally cited themes, but it does show the popularity of certain themes. Within their strategic plans, most libraries emphasize collection themes related to access, DEI, and open access/open scholarship.

Frequency of Specific Collection Terms

The word frequency analysis of specific collection terms, including collect(ion), resources, materials, and content, assumes that one of these words is likely to be mentioned if library resources or collections are being discussed. It is true that other collection-related terms exist, such as preservation, digitization, discovery, and access, but context and broad use of these terms may not always be collection-related. Table 2 presents the portion percentage of the selected terms that appear within the plans. There are 39 libraries that mention the selected terms more than 2% within

their plans. This represents 36% of the plans studied, which leads to the conclusion that either these terms are no longer abundantly used to refer to collection activities or there is limited mention of collection-related activities.

The academic libraries with the highest percentage of collection references frequency includes MIT Libraries (8.3%) and University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library (6.9%). Out of the 240 words searched in the MIT Libraries plan, there are four mentions of collect(ions), 13 mentions of content, and three mentions of resources. One of the primary collection-related themes in their plan includes digital preservation. For the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library, there is a total word count of 694, which includes 28 mentions of collect(ions), one of content, eight of resources, and 11 of material. Their primary focus on collections is part of a header/section title labeled "Strategize and Design Collections for the Future." Use of these terms appears more often if there is some type of header/section title that referenced collections either directly or tangentially. Out of the 39 libraries that mention the selected terms above 2%, 31 have a collection-related header/section title. Based on the findings, plans that have higher instances of these terms are more likely to have a collection-related header/section title. Seventy-nine percent of libraries in the highest term frequency group (above 2%) have a collection-related header/section title; compare that with the other groups whose libraries are both below 70% that have a header/section title mentioning a collection-related theme.

One library does not mention any of the selected collection-related terms. Unfortunately, their posted plan only shares out their strategic goals, so the text is quite limited. Within that plan, there is a goal header that highlights discovery, access, and use of information; unfortunately, the term "information" felt too broad to include as one of the selected searched collection terms, so that library is grouped into the 'not mentioned' category.

Table 2

Portion Percentage Groups that Mention Collect(ion), Resources, Content, and/or Materials

| Percentage Groups | Libraries |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Not mentioned | 1 |
| Under 1% | 17 |
| 1-2% | 53 |
| Above 2% | 39 |

Analysis of Headers/Section Titles

For further analysis, the headers/section titles of the plans were analyzed if they had any direct or related mention of collections. Out of the 110 plans, 34 mention collect(ions) within one of their headers or section titles. Out of those 34, 25 headers/section titles place collections as a primary focus rather than a secondary listing mixed in with multiple initiatives. Out of the remaining 76 library plans that do not directly mention collections as part of a header, 53 have some type of alternative reference to a collection-related activity. The 21% of libraries that does not have any collection-related references within the headers/section titles opts to focus on other strategic priorities or tends to be vague with the wording, such as "innovate," which could reference many different library activities.

Qualitative analysis of the headers/section titles uncovers various ways of highlighting collections and prominent themes. Reviewing headers/section titles that directly mention the term collections often pair the term with other descriptors, such as responsive, connected, world-class, distinct(ive), diverse, sustainable, quality, enduring, and rich. Actions involving collections include terms like building, creating, delivering, embracing equity, reflecting diversity, adapting, strategizing, discovering, designing, engaging, enhancing digital access, preserving, promoting, extending/broadening access, use for acceleration of scholarship and learning, enhancing, and expanding. Out of the

25 libraries that concentrate on collections within their headers/section titles, “access” is mentioned by five libraries and “diversity/equity” by three libraries. The nine libraries that mention collection in a secondary way tend to group collections with instruction, services, spaces, and staffing. The term service(s) is a universal term for all nine of these plans.

Additional Collection-Related Themes from the Headers/Section Titles

Qualitative analysis was used to link more headers/section titles to collection-related themes. Because headers/section titles do not always directly reference the term collections, qualitative analysis was used to include several other headers/section titles that could be linked to collection-related themes. An additional 62 libraries refer to collections indirectly within their headers/section titles while 16 libraries directly reference collections, totaling 78 libraries, which makes up 71%. This leaves 29% of libraries without any direct or indirect reference to collections. Many of the collection themes required some subjective interpretation from the researcher but are likely linked to collection initiatives. Many headers were selected, because the activities or practices listed depend on library collections.

Examples of collection-related initiatives retrieved from headers/section titles include:

- **Access:** information access, improve, equitable, expand, diversify, enhance, access to cultural record, create, information access, curate, convenient
- **Digital:** preservation, content programs, scholarship
- **Discovery:** new knowledge, research, catalyze
- **Information & Information Management:** meet needs, information resources, discovery, equity, high quality, creative management
- **Knowledge:** generation, creation, access to, advance, global, new knowledge, disseminate, accessible knowledge
- **Open Initiatives:** open scholarship, open educational resources, open science
- **Preservation:** digital preservation, intensify, preserve cultural memory, special libraries
- **Research:** lifecycle support, decolonize, leader, enhance, growth, high impact, build eminence, deepen access, enhance ecosystem, share output, transformative
- **Scholarly Communication/Record:** research output, support, leader, creators, scholarly activity
- **Stewardship:** steward and share scholarly record, stewardship of print, trusted steward, steward assets

The number and percentage of libraries referencing collections within the headers/section titles is displayed in Table 3. Collection themes are integrated into at least one of the major fields of many ARL strategic plans, but the term “collection” is not always used.

Table 3
Collection Themes in Headers/Section Titles

| Grouping | # of Libraries | % of Libraries |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Collection concepts referenced | 78 | 71% |
| Direct mention of collections | 34 | 31% |
| Indirect mention of collections | 62 | 56% |
| No reference of collections | 32 | 29% |

Discussion

Findings show that collection themes are still featured as a strategic focus for many ARL academic libraries, but descriptive collection-related terms are far-reaching. Extracting collection-related activities from most strategic plans requires interpretive knowledge. Collection themes are now integrated into various services. With collection activities closely linked as a service, libraries recognize the need to continue to develop collections but reshape the way collection development is approached (Dempsey, 2020; Linden et al., 2018; Way, 2017). The analysis of collection-related language used in the headers/section titles provides insight into how libraries are framing work around collections. Collection work is now often linked with terms like access, stewardship, open, discovery, knowledge, digital, and many others. The thematic analysis shows that collection-related work and terms associated with collections are still part of ARL academic libraries' strategic planning, but in some library plans, collection themes seem to be much more embedded. Based on the findings, intentional mention of collection within headers/section titles is likely to increase the amount of times terms like collect(ions), content, resources, and materials are used within the plan. However, only focusing on these terms presents a limited focus of collection-related activities within ARL Libraries.

As demonstrated by the Dedoose qualitative text analysis, collections work can fall under a range of themes. Collection work varies between each institution, but a majority of the ARL academic libraries are focused on expanding or improving collection access, linking DEI to collection initiatives, and exploring options for open access and open scholarship. Terms like collections, resources, content, and materials are still used but are not always mentioned when referring to collection work. Some might argue if the mention of collections seems too deeply embedded within library objectives, are collections still holding a central focus? Reiger (2019) notes many libraries are now featuring collections less and focusing on their services. Evidence to support this claim would require a comparative analysis between older plans and the newest version, but unfortunately, most older plans are removed when the newer plan is created. Library trend reports allow for speculation until more longitudinal studies can be conducted. An attempt was made to track down some archived plans linked with ARL academic libraries, but the sample was quite small. Some of the historic documentation may suggest that the term "collections" appears more frequently in older plans, but there is not enough data to draw any solid conclusions. Some examples include the University of Kansas Libraries and York University Libraries. The [University of Kansas Libraries' 2012-2017 plan](https://tinyurl.com/3pjmfnrm) (tinyurl.com/3pjmfnrm) mentions collections 10 times, but their [2024-2028 plan](https://lib.ku.edu/strategic-plan) (lib.ku.edu/strategic-plan) only mentions it twice. [York University Libraries' 2016-2020 plan](https://tinyurl.com/mruzwj88) (tinyurl.com/mruzwj88) mentions the term collection 12 times, but their [2021-2026 plan](https://tinyurl.com/mruzwj88) (tinyurl.com/mruzwj88) mentions collections six times. Noting possibility of these changes raises possible inquiry for research in the future. For now, this study highlights which terms and framing are used to focus on collection-related work within strategic plans.

Libraries have a range of priorities that must be addressed and limited amounts of time to focus on every aspect of their work. In the future, it would be interesting to analyze the variety of themes presented within the headers/section titles, such as user-experience, spaces, learning, technology, outreach, and organizational priorities. There are also questions about whether libraries are united with collection-related activity. Are some libraries moving past other libraries to conceptualize the next phase of collection-related work? Based on the findings from this study, collection-terms may also include terms, such as assets, information, knowledge, research, cultural memory/record, open scholarship, research output, scholarly record, and scholarly communication, that seem more open-ended for collections that have yet to be created or identified. Thus, collection representation may be present but may be referenced with updated terms.

Limitations

Although this data presents insight into the way academic libraries frame collections within their strategic planning, there are also some limitations worth mentioning. Summarized versions of the plans with limited descriptive details may affect the way libraries were grouped within the word frequency analysis. This study also chose to include a few plans that were slightly older. The time when a plan was written may be influenced by certain trends. The word frequency analysis was also intentionally kept simple, with only four terms searched, but studies in the future may want to expand the search. This would be especially important, since this study found that references to collection-related themes covers a wide variety of terms and these terms vary between libraries.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, collection activities can be difficult to track within academic library strategic planning documentation. Collections are referenced with a variety of terms, and the placement of collection themes is not consistent between libraries. Thematic analysis shows that while there are several libraries that defer to traditional collection-related terms, such as collect(ions), resources, content, and materials, other libraries might include terms like assets, information, knowledge, research, cultural memory/record, open scholarship, research output, scholarly record, and scholarly communication. For this reason, reviewing plans for collections content requires knowledgeable interpretation and understanding of collection-related work. Conducting qualitative analysis provides awareness of the various activities and services that are increasingly linked to current collection-related initiatives. This analysis found that terms, such as discover, preserve, open, steward, digitize, manage, generate, create, and access are often being used to describe collection-related work. It is important for library-related literature and curriculum to keep up with these updated trends, so future librarians can be aware of the changing collections landscape.

Though this study presents enlightening data that draws attention to how libraries frame collection-related work, comparative data from the past and the future would provide a richer insight into changes over time. Library strategic plans provide useful knowledge about library priorities, such as how collection priorities are shifting. Current ARL academic library strategic plans show there are not any universal collection themes, but some themes tend to come up more often. Themes such as access, DEI, and open access/scholarship tend to be mentioned more frequently. These themes seem to indicate that many libraries are eager to ensure that their library collections remain available to a wide range of groups and consider representation of diverse authors and subject-matter. It is worth tracking the presence of these themes over time.

The findings of this study show that there are common themes that can be extracted from library strategic plans. This data presents insights into libraries' goal prioritization that could help collection librarians understand the future direction and demands for their work. It is also useful, as Dempsey et al. (2014) note, for libraries to recognize changing collection patterns and their role within a greater network. As libraries become familiar with dominant priorities, there can be a more unified effort to collaborate or challenge problematic narratives. Studies, such as this one, can provide valuable takeaways for those who develop and share the narratives around collection work.

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Appendix 1

ARL Academic Library Strategies Included in the Study

| Library | Referencing Link | Year Span |
|--|---|-----------|
| Arizona State University Library | https://tinyurl.com/h8kdhenc | 2020-2023 |
| Atlanta University Center Robert W. Woodruff Library | https://tinyurl.com/3ub6ukh7 | 2020-2024 |
| Auburn University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/32rr7nny | 2019-2024 |
| Bibliothèque de l' Université Laval | https://tinyurl.com/5n6retwm | 2023-2028 |
| Brigham Young University Library | https://tinyurl.com/mr4249z7 | 2023 |
| Brown University Library | https://tinyurl.com/e7zbu55t | 2019-2024 |
| Case Western Reserve University Kelvin Smith Library | https://rb.gy/9xhbj3 | 2023 |
| Colorado State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/34kbmhzw | present |
| Columbia University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mub89fnu | present |
| Cornell University Library | https://tinyurl.com/4jxs6c5p | 2024 |
| Dartmouth College Library | https://tinyurl.com/wtd7h3c7 | 2024 |
| Duke University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3rchs95e | 2024-2029 |
| Emory University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/hm8979fs | 2024 |
| Florida State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/59s6zta2 | present |
| Georgetown University Library | https://tinyurl.com/4x3p4ykf | 2024-2026 |
| Georgia Tech Library | https://tinyurl.com/rvuu75m9 | 2019-2022 |
| Harvard Library | https://tinyurl.com/bcmazx78 | present |
| Indiana University Libraries Bloomington | https://tinyurl.com/3s4y6yfy | present |
| Iowa State University Library | https://tinyurl.com/4wb3k9td | 2023-2031 |
| Kent State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3s6nu66h | 2023-2024 |

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|---|---|-----------|
| Louisiana State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3xupjun2 | 2017-2022 |
| McGill Library | https://tinyurl.com/bdzcyk4h | 2023-2024 |
| McMaster University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4a7m3dwk | 2023-2026 |
| Michigan State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/38xkrwfy | present |
| MIT Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2ektpm5e | present |
| NC State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/waxe3tfr | 2022-2027 |
| Northwestern Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/ysda74ba | 2019-2022 |
| NYU Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5bfenhcz | 2024 |
| Ohio State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/yd5k7mbm | 2022-2024 |
| Ohio University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3tcy65b3 | 2021-2023 |
| Penn Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/nkrbzy7u | 2020-2025 |
| Penn State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2rnhrv9 | 2020-2025 |
| Princeton University Library | https://tinyurl.com/3fedwtwy | present |
| Purdue University Libraries and School of Information Studies | https://tinyurl.com/bp6u4py6 | 2022-2025 |
| Queen’s University Library | https://tinyurl.com/2s36jh2w | 2022-2025 |
| Rice University Library | https://tinyurl.com/ybh6ky3e | 2018 |
| Rutgers University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2fmbrudj | 2020-2023 |
| Simon Fraser University Library | https://tinyurl.com/49tf38us | 2022-2024 |
| Stony Brook University, SUNY, Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/w33nbtmj | 2024-2029 |
| Syracuse University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/pfmpbu82 | 2018-2022 |
| Temple University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2nxx2r54 | present |
| Texas A&M University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/p4knsv7z | 2022-2027 |

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|---|---|-------------|
| Texas State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2jfu5s39 | 2023-2029 |
| Tulane University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4zw5k63v | present |
| UC Berkeley Library | https://tinyurl.com/h96xehep | 2024 |
| UC Davis Library | https://tinyurl.com/5jfmw2nd | 2022-2027 |
| UC Riverside Library | https://tinyurl.com/yx776a4w | present |
| UC San Diego Library | https://tinyurl.com/psd3xvxn | 2022-2027 |
| UC Santa Barbara Library | https://tinyurl.com/yhw4zryn | 2023-2026 |
| UC Santa Cruz Library | https://tinyurl.com/5xc6jp7t | present |
| UCI Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3kx254cd | 2023-2028 |
| UCLA Library | https://tinyurl.com/5x9bvrdu | present |
| UConn Library | https://tinyurl.com/37mrpjak | 2020-2024 |
| UIC University Library | https://tinyurl.com/yckck65a | 2019-2021 |
| UNC University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/n3755yph | 2024 |
| University at Albany, SUNY, University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/327v4hft | 2018-2023 |
| University of Alabama Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mr27zba4 | 2022-2025 |
| University of Alberta Library | https://tinyurl.com/3mr73mpk | 2023-2024 |
| University of Arizona Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/bdeshu9k | 2022-2025 |
| University of British Columbia Library | https://tinyurl.com/ykrrh6r8 | 2019 |
| University of Chicago Library | https://tinyurl.com/4k8zmr9r | 2025-2028 |
| University of Cincinnati Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mrw8kezz | & 2022-2025 |
| | https://tinyurl.com/3a5w2kn5 | |
| University of Colorado Boulder Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4nzh9w56 | 2023-2026 |
| University of Delaware Library, Museums and Press | https://tinyurl.com/5euu3bdh | 2023-2014 |

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|--|---|-----------|
| University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4n7k54tw | 2018 |
| University of Georgia Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/57mtrpu2 | 2022-2025 |
| University of Guelph Library | https://tinyurl.com/5x83rpk3 | 2017-2023 |
| University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library | https://tinyurl.com/uzea2hsx | 2024-2029 |
| University of Houston Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/yrns2sbv | 2021-2027 |
| University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library | https://tinyurl.com/453k6uy4 | 2019-2023 |
| University of Iowa Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mvzzmxj6 | 2022-2027 |
| University of Kansas Libraries | https://lib.ku.edu/strategic-plan | 2024-2028 |
| University of Kentucky Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5n8vtt4t | 2021-2026 |
| University of Louisville Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/sran47ax | 2023-2025 |
| University of Manitoba Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2dvtabud | present |
| University of Maryland University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3w986d7e | present |
| University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/y5n96hx3 | 2024-2029 |
| University of Miami Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/y4hbp36a | 2017-2025 |
| University of Michigan Library | https://tinyurl.com/mwfjzd49 | 2022-2024 |
| University of Minnesota Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mry7hpmn | 2021-2025 |
| University of Missouri Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3hbucpwd | 2017 |
| University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/58ty4vpz | 2020-2022 |
| University of New Mexico Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2k9trsv9 | 2022-2025 |
| University of North Texas University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4vxasrvd | present |
| University of Notre Dame Hesburgh Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5uake7e2 | 2022 |
| University of Oklahoma Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/2h7654ar | 2022-2024 |
| University of Oregon Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/46atdu8r | 2023-2028 |

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|---|---|-----------|
| University of Ottawa Library | https://tinyurl.com/yc33xbja | 2025 |
| University of Pittsburgh University Library System | https://tinyurl.com/3kzsfeua | 2020-2025 |
| University of Rochester River Campus Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mw7nm8vd | 2018-2025 |
| University of Saskatchewan University Library | https://tinyurl.com/ye26k9sx | 2018-2025 |
| University of South Carolina Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/28rw8t7v | 2022-2024 |
| University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5bcxphnk | 2023-2030 |
| University of Texas Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5y9hsxxe | present |
| University of Toronto Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/y66jyn23 | 2020-2025 |
| University of Utah J. Willard Marriott Library | https://tinyurl.com/ywfmsnkc | 2015-2020 |
| University of Virginia Library | https://tinyurl.com/44jxmhc2 | 2019-2024 |
| University of Washington Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/355v3d3p | 2023-2026 |
| University of Waterloo Library | https://tinyurl.com/m99frtb2 | 2020-2025 |
| University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/j4k7u3k5 | present |
| USC Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/4vskjv59 | 2022 |
| Vanderbilt University Jean & Alexander Heard Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/52stkd7 | present |
| VCU Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5bfz9zu7 | 2028 |
| Virginia Tech University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5juwvpxe | 2020-2025 |
| Washington State University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/5fcrupcu | 2024-2029 |
| Washington University in St. Louis University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/3demhemn | present |
| Wayne State University Library System | https://tinyurl.com/mw2fedpd | 2021 |
| Western Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/yc5uzc56 | 2018-2024 |
| Yale University Library | https://library.yale.edu/about-us | 2022 |
| York University Libraries | https://tinyurl.com/mruzwj88 | 2021-2026 |

Appendix 2

ARL Libraries Excluded from the Study

| Library | Reason for Exclusion |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Boston College Libraries | Plan not publicly posted |
| Boston Public Library | Non-academic library |
| Boston University Libraries | Outdated plan posted (2010-2015) |
| Center for Research Libraries | Non-academic library |
| George Washington University Libraries and Academic Innovation | Plan not publicly posted |
| Howard University Libraries | Plan not publicly posted |
| Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries | Plan not publicly posted |
| Library of Congress | Non-academic library |
| National Agricultural Library | Non-academic library |
| National Library of Medicine | Non-academic library |
| New York Public Library | Non-academic library |
| Oklahoma State University Libraries | Plan not publicly posted |
| Smithsonian Libraries and Archives | Non-academic library |
| Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Morris Library | Plan not publicly posted |
| Texas Tech University Libraries | Plan not publicly posted |
| University at Buffalo, SUNY, Libraries | Outdated plan posted (2013-2016) |
| University of Calgary Libraries and Cultural Resources | Plan not publicly posted |