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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND FACULTY CAREER DECISIONS

Project part of the Association of Research Libraries' Research Library Impact Pilots

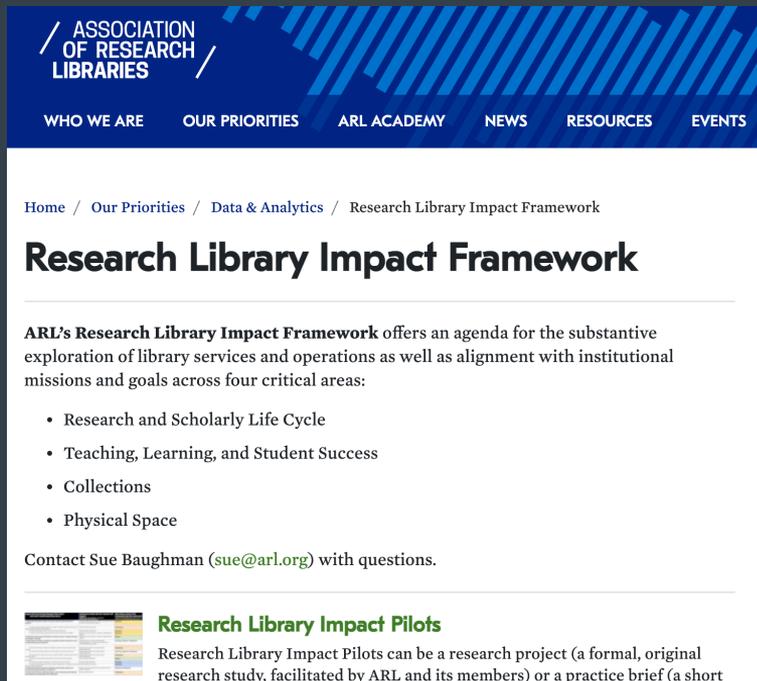
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Research Library Impact Pilots



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES

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Research Library Impact Framework

ARL's **Research Library Impact Framework** offers an agenda for the substantive exploration of library services and operations as well as alignment with institutional missions and goals across four critical areas:

- Research and Scholarly Life Cycle
- Teaching, Learning, and Student Success
- Collections
- Physical Space

Contact Sue Baughman (sue@arl.org) with questions.

Research Library Impact Pilots

Research Library Impact Pilots can be a research project (a formal, original research study, facilitated by ARL and its members) or a practice brief (a short

Focus Area: Collections

Research Question:

(How) do the library's collections play a role in attracting and retaining top researchers and faculty to the institution



Our Approach

- *Literature Review*: Cluff and Murrah, "The Influence of library resources on faculty recruitment and retention" (1987)
- *Audience*: recruited and promoted faculty from 2013-2018
- *Qualtrics Survey*: 284 survey responses (29% response rate)
 - Example: The quality of the library was a factor in my decision to accept the university's offer. (Yes or No)
- *Semi-Structured Interviews*: 13 faculty members
 - Example: What factors helped you decide to seek employment at the university? Would these same factors still take priority in your decision-making now? If not, which would you consider now?



Our Findings

1. Access to collections is a priority.
2. Assumptions about collections are widespread.
3. Local special collections are deeply impactful to certain faculty.
4. Factors that influence faculty recruitment and retention are generally personal and multifaceted.



Immediate Access

“If it takes time ... I usually try to find another way of finding the information that I need ...”

– *STEM Faculty Member*

“I almost exclusively use stuff online. In fact, if it's not online, unless it seems incredibly pertinent, I will often be like, ‘Well, I guess I'm not going to use that.’”

– *Social Science Faculty Member* 

On Campus Access

“In the humanities, the libraries are laboratories.... Not all of us just simply use online sources. If you go into the library, you're always going to stumble across something. So the idea of having a standing, physical collection I think is absolutely fundamental to the methods that we use.”

“Disappointing to have to use off-site storage to recall an item ... I tend to need items here and now, NOT in several days' time.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Members* 

Assumptions about Material Availability

“For us, libraries are something like air; we definitely need it to run the University, but somewhat we assume it is always available.”

– *STEM Faculty Member*

“I will admit, it didn't even occur me to ask because UT is a top university. The idea that they wouldn't have what I need seemed crazy.”

– *Social Science Faculty Member*



Assumed a Seamless Experience

“My assumption would have been that probably, given the size of the university, that [*the library’s collections*] would be on the comparable path [*to another R1 university*], but that is indeed a question that I didn't ask myself. And now actually in hindsight, it's actually a good question.”

– *STEM Faculty Member*



Assumptions Vary by Discipline

“I do field and archival based research, so it is natural that any given university library would not hold my primary materials.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Member*



Value of Special Collections

“I decided that there was more original work here that would allow me to stay here and I can do work that would take me further as opposed to using stuff that's highly utilized.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Member*



Special Collections & Recruitment

“I have used the archives at UT in my research for decades. They are the best in the country for what I do, and that was a key reason I agreed to come here.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Member*



Special Collections & Retention

“It is one of those things that gives me pause about going to another place ... the rich resources here and the relationships with a lot of the special collections archivist librarians is ... really important to me.”

– *Social Science Faculty Member*



Why UT Austin?

Factors that took priority:

- Salary
- Geographic location & weather
- University's value on both teaching and research
- Ability to work with graduate students
- Family needs & spousal hires
- Department/institution reputation or vision
- Local centers and networks
- Opportunity to grow an area of study or do original research



Role of the Library Collection

“It upsets me as a faculty member to think that the libraries . . . would be seen as less valuable when they are single handedly the reason that we are here. And I cannot say that strongly enough.”

– *Social Science Faculty Member*



Importance Varies by Type of Research

“UT Libraries, including both the strength of its collections and the impressive knowledge and expertise of its staff, are absolutely fundamental to why I am at this university. They underpin everything I do as both a researcher and a teacher.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Member*



Factor in Future Career Decisions

“I was a bit ignorant of how impressive the UT library is when I was hired. However, I have since come to appreciate just how important it is. After experiencing the quality of the library and the services the staff provide, I WOULD definitely use the library as a criterion if I were to seek another job elsewhere.”

– *Social Science Faculty Member*



What the Library Collection Represents

“The quality of UT Libraries is fundamental to the quality not only of my research but of my general work experience at UT. I have benefited immensely from both the collection and the human resources the Libraries offer, and I am concerned that these strengths will be diminished if support for the Libraries is not a UT budgeting priority. I am considering going on the market again in the next few years, and one of the factors that will be involved in my decision at that point is whether the University has decided to invest more in the Libraries. If it hasn't, that will be a serious negative in the ‘stay here’ column.”

– *Arts & Humanities Faculty Member*

