



CARLI

Consortium of
Academic and Research
Libraries in Illinois

A Summary of the 2022 Illinois Library Transformations Survey Results Approved by the CARLI Board of Directors, June 10, 2022

During March of 2022, CARLI-member libraries were invited to share how their library has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were asked to briefly identify up to 3 good changes at their library (ex. successful innovations they will do permanently), identify up to 3 difficult changes that their library made (reductions to budget, programming, staffing, space, etc.), and to optionally share any changes, good or bad, at their institution as a whole. Below is a brief summary of the 122 responses from 82 (67%) of the 127 CARLI member libraries. All library types contributed their experiences including public universities, private colleges or universities, community colleges, and special libraries. A [detailed report](#) of these results is available.

Responses of positive changes at CARLI-member libraries that will continue in the future reflect how CARLI-member libraries demonstrated resilience and ingenuity in serving students, faculty, and staff at their institutions. The following trends reflected that libraries

- Increased investment and prioritization of electronic resources over physical resources;
- Pivoted to offering library services virtually including consultations, library instruction, tours, and programs;
- Expanded offerings for the circulation of library materials including contactless options for pickup, delivery, and returns and increased circulation of laptops, hotspots, and additional electronics to support online learning;
- Improved services through implementing many new systems and advancing existing technologies;
- Improved physical spaces to be more inviting, accessible, and meet COVID safety protocols;
- Offered staff more flexible work policies including remote and hybrid arrangements;
- Offered staff opportunities for skills building that resulted in increased awareness of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and Open Educational Resources (OER).

Responses of difficult changes reflected the severe challenges libraries faced and continue to face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Trends include:

- Reductions to library budgets which significantly impact library operations;
- Severe staffing losses and unfilled positions;
- Low staff morale;

- Reductions to physical library hours, spaces, and use;
- Library spaces repurposed or reduced;
- Library services reduced.

Responses of institutional changes, good or bad, varied widely, but a few topics stood out:

- Many libraries are concerned about their budgets in the face of declining student enrollments and student traffic on campus;
- Libraries are concerned their robust virtual services and programs will not be recognized by administrators who previously focused on physical attendance;
- Continuation of flexible work arrangements vary based on the institution;
- Several library space redesigns are occurring with varying levels of librarian input in the decisions.

What stands out among the many difficult challenges Illinois libraries faced during the COVID-19 pandemic is how successfully libraries pivoted and adapted to continue to serve their students, faculty, and staff. Their resilience and steadfast service to their institutions are commendable.