Principles of Membership in the Association of Research Libraries

The mission of the Association of Research Libraries is to “influence the changing environment of scholarly communication and the public policies that affect research libraries and the diverse communities they serve. ARL pursues this mission by advancing the goals of its member research libraries, providing leadership in public and information policy to the scholarly and higher education communities, fostering the exchange of ideas and expertise, facilitating the emergence of new roles for research libraries, and shaping a future environment that leverages its interests with those of allied organizations.” ARL is a not-for-profit membership organization comprising the libraries of North American research institutions and operates as a forum for the exchange of ideas and as an agent for collective action.

Membership in ARL is by invitation and based on single institutions, not systems. Once achieved, membership in the Association is presumed to be continuing.

The following principles are used in considering extending invitations for ARL membership.

1. The members of ARL are research libraries distinguished by the breadth and quality of their collections and services. Each member makes distinctive contributions to the aggregation of research resources and services in North America and, through individual and cooperative efforts, strives to preserve for the future the record of knowledge represented by these collections.

2. Membership is based on the research nature of the library and the parent institution’s aspirations and achievements as a research institution. The parent institution’s accomplishments are established by the classification Research Universities (high or very high) as reflected by the current Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education™ and published by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, membership in the Association of American Universities, or by comparable affiliations or documentation.

3. ARL members individually contribute to the broader research library community and are distinguished by common characteristics including:
   
   a. Distinctive research-oriented collections and resources of national or international significance in a variety of media that result in shared or collective collections that support global research and core and specialized services to the scholarly community of faculty, students, and visiting scholars;

   b. Leadership and participation in national and/or international library-related programs that advance the role of libraries in the scholarly information and research environment;

   c. Creation of tools and services that facilitate discovery of collections and holdings;
d. Preservation and archiving of research resources to ensure their availability for future scholars;

e. Effective development and innovative use of technology to extend the ability to deliver library and research-support services;

f. Active engagement and involvement of the library in support of academic planning and research programs of the institution (e.g., development of new academic programs, participation in teaching, research grants or projects, level of advancement support, service on institutional committees, involvement in governance, etc.);

g. Appropriate institutional infrastructure, both physical and digital, that support the mission, roles, and collections of the library within the institutional framework.

h. Leadership and external contributions of the staff to the profession;

i. Collaborations and partnerships with other libraries, consortia, or cultural institutions to leverage cost-effective activities or extend the reach of existing resources and services.

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