

Anne Marie Gruber

# Community engagement in higher education

## Online information sources

In an age of challenging public discourse and increased pressure for educational accountability, many colleges are renewing their commitments to the public purposes of higher education. In fact, presidents and chancellors at more than 450 institutions signed Campus Compact's 30th Anniversary Action Statement<sup>1</sup> in 2016, reaffirming their dedication to preparing students for engaged citizenship, to changing social and economic inequalities, and to contributing to their communities as place-based institutions. In practical terms, many campuses are placing increased emphasis on real-world learning experiences for students through opportunities such as service-learning, internships, and community-based research.

The Carnegie Foundation defines community engagement as "collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity."<sup>2</sup> Communities can be local, regional, statewide, national, or international. The Carnegie Foundation emphasizes that such partnerships not only address societal concerns and contribute to the public good, but also can enhance teaching, learning, and research, preparing students to be engaged citizens.<sup>3</sup> Service-learning is one pedagogical approach to incorporating community engagement into the curriculum. One commonly-accepted definition from Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher

characterizes service-learning as "a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity."<sup>4</sup> Research suggests that such experiences have positive implications for student retention and success as well as students' understanding of course content and sense of civic responsibility.

Academic library involvement in community engagement can include providing resources and instruction for researchers and community partners, providing physical and online spaces for planning and sharing projects, and taking part directly in library-community collaborations. For instruction librarians, becoming involved in service-learning courses may provide some practical ideas for applying the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.<sup>5</sup> Supporting community engagement projects can help library faculty and staff leverage their position on campus and demonstrate the library's value to various stakeholders both on campus and beyond. Academic libraries' own community projects may include partnerships with area schools, public lectures and events, exhib-

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its, and other activities. Library-community connections are likely to continue growing.

The key resources included below will help librarians learn more about community engagement, with a focus on the academic library's role in supporting this common campus priority.

## Professional and higher education organizations

- **Campus Compact.** Campus Compact is a national, institutional membership organization advancing community engage-



ment and the public purposes of higher education. There are more than 1,100 member institutions. Goals include strengthening practitioner networks, building capacity, and educating students to be engaged citizens. State chapters offer local and regional conferences, professional development programs for engaged faculty (including research support), and support through AmeriCorps VISTA programs. *Access:* <https://compact.org/>.

- **Civic Learning American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U).** AAC&U provides many resources for strengthening civic and social responsibility, including white papers, campus models and case studies, assessment tools, and publications. This is an institutional membership organization, though many resources are also available to nonmembers. *Access:* <https://www.aacu.org/resources/civic-learning>.

- **Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC).** ESC, an institutional membership organization, supports university-community partnerships with an emphasis on research and scholarship. In addition to an annual conference and publishing two journals, ESC also offers an annual, selective Emerging Engagement Scholars Workshop

for doctoral students and early-career faculty interested in community-engaged scholarship. *Access:* <https://engagementscholarship.org/>.

- **International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE).** This key organization advances research focused on community engagement. It offers an annual conference and provides resources such as a journal, *Graduate Student Network*, job postings, an email newsletter, webinars, and awards/recognition for faculty and graduate student scholarship. *Access:* <http://www.researchslce.org/>.

- **National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.** This searchable database of free online service-learning resources includes assignments, articles, activities, reflection prompts, and more. It includes both K–12 and higher education resources. *Access:* <https://gsn.nylc.org/clearinghouse>.

- **Swearer Center for Public Service, Brown University.** The center coordinates the elective Community Engagement Classification for higher education institutions (formerly coordinated by the Carnegie Foundation, 2006-2016). Criteria includes institutional mission, reciprocity of community relationships, assessment, scholarship, and other areas. *Access:* <https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/swearer/carnegie-community-engagement-classification>.

## Academic library's role

- **Colloquium on Libraries and Service Learning.** This small conference coordinated by Jennifer Nutefall, dean of libraries at Santa Clara University, was held for the first time in 2014 and has been held annually since 2016. Sessions focus on intersections between libraries and service-learning projects in all disciplines. Session materials are archived and downloadable. *Access:* <http://scholarcommons.scu.edu/libraries-and-service-learning/>.

- **The Role of Libraries in Engagement Work.** This Campus Compact Knowledge Hub is curated by Sarah

Goodwin Thiel, community engagement librarian at University of Kansas Libraries. This guide focuses on librarians as relationship-builders and provides links to key resources and exemplars. *Access:* <https://compact.org/resource-posts/role-libraries-engagement-work/>.

- **Service Learning and Civic Engagement LibGuide, Elon University.** This guide provides information about how to conduct research for community projects, with relevant databases and free online resources. It is a good example of a place-based emphasis, providing local data. Note there are many other relevant LibGuides beyond the two examples provided here. *Access:* <http://elon.libguides.com/civicengagement>.

- **Service Learning and Community Engagement LibGuide, University of Nebraska Omaha.** This guide includes key definitions and components of service-learning, information about the Barbara A. Holland Collection for Service Learning and Community Engagement, syllabus/assignment examples, and a bibliography. *Access:* <http://libguides.unomaha.edu/SLCE>.

- **Service Learning, Information Literacy, and Libraries.** This volume (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited) by Jennifer Nutefall, connects the parallel histories and related goals of the information literacy and service learning movements. Each chapter is by a different librarian or library-faculty team, providing a wide variety of case studies. *Access:* E-book available at <http://www.abc-clio.com/LibrariesUnlimited/product.aspx?pc=A4912P>.

- **Service Learning Librarian blog.** Posts on this blog are by Maureen Barry of Wright State University Libraries and guest contributors. The focus is on intersections between information literacy and service-learning, and additional resources include a

bibliography. *Access:* <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/community/servicelearning/>.

## Inspiration from multiple library types

- **Civic and Community Engagement, Urban Libraries Council.** The Urban Libraries Council awards public library honors for innovative community projects in a variety of categories. This webpage describes honored projects that could be modified for any library type/size. *Access:* <https://www.urbanlibraries.org/civic-and-community-engagement-pages-530.php>.

- **Community Engagement and Outreach, Public Library Association.** ALA provides resources to help libraries engage with their communities through the Libraries Transform campaign, universal access principles, and various outreach strategies. They also provide resources focused on working with community groups. *Access:* <http://www.ala.org/pla/resources/tools/community-engagement-outreach>.

- **Libraries Foster Community Engagement, ALA Connect.** This online community provides a venue for discussion and sharing focused on library-led community engagement. Both ALA members and non-members can use ALA Connect, though nonmembers have some limitations. *Access:* <http://connect.ala.org/node/64933>.

- **Museums, Libraries and Comprehensive Initiatives: A First Look at Emerging Experience.** A collaboration between the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, this report discusses library and museum roles as “community anchors” supporting in community revitalization, with an emphasis on economically disadvantaged areas. *Access:* <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/museumslibrariesandcomprehensiveinitiatives.pdf>.

## Open access journals

- **Community Works Journal.** A



publication of the Community Works Institute, this journal supports teaching practices that build community. Themes include service-learning, sustainability, and the importance of place. *Access:* <http://www.communityworksinstitute.org/cwjonline/>.

- **Diversity & Democracy.** This journal provides support for civic learning and democratic engagement in higher education, including focusing on global learning and engaging students with diversity in many forms. *Access:* <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy>.

- **International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement.** Published by the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, this journal focuses on scholarship related to engagement. It aims to be rigorous, multidisciplinary, comprehensive, and international in scope. *Access:* <https://journals.sfu.ca/iarslce/index.php>.

- **Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education.** This journal includes a balance of research and practice, with many case studies. *Access:* <https://discovery.indstate.edu/jcehe/index.php/>.

- **Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship (JCES).** JCES includes the integration of teaching, research, and engagement, emphasizing “community-participatory processes.” Opportunities are available for students to volunteer as editorial liaisons. *Access:* <http://jces.ua.edu/>.

- **Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement (JHEOE).** JHEOE seeks to be the premier interdisciplinary journal focused on community engagement theory and practice. *Access:* <http://openjournals.libs.uga.edu/index.php/jheoe>.

- **Journal of Public Scholarship in Higher Education.** This journal provides a venue for disseminating knowledge across disciplines as a product of campus-community partnerships. *Access:* <https://jpshe.missouristate.edu/>.

- **Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning.** The journal encourages research and pedagogical scholarship to inform and expand the community of service-learning practitioners/researchers. *Access:* <https://ginsberg.umich.edu/mjcs/>.

- **Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement.** Partnerships focuses on improving campus-community collaborations through theory and practice. Articles coauthored with community partners and students, as well as intercampus projects are particularly encouraged. *Access:* <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/prt>.

- **Undergraduate Journal of Service Learning and Community-Based Research.** This journal welcomes intellectual and reflective works by undergraduate students, encouraging student voice in community engagement research. *Access:* <http://berks.psu.edu/undergraduate-journal>.

## Notes

1. “30th Anniversary Action Statement of Presidents and Chancellors,” Campus Compact, March 20, 2016, <https://compact.org/actionstatement/statement/>.

2. “Carnegie Community Engagement Classification,” New England Resource Center for Higher Education, [http://nerche.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=341&Itemid=618](http://nerche.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=341&Itemid=618).

3. Ibid.

4. Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, “Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 67 (2): 221–39, [www.jstor.org/stable/2943981](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2943981).

5. ACRL “Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education,” [www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework\\_ILHE.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org/acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework_ILHE.pdf). 

