

### Academic libraries can make a difference in the 2020 Census

The 2020 Census will be a central focus across the country this year, and academic libraries can take an active role in promoting its importance. It's an opportunity to collaborate with campus administrators, students, faculty, community leaders, and elected officials to achieve a fair and accurate Census count. The results of the Census will affect federal funding allocations, Congressional representation, and planning and policy decisions for the next decade.

A recent George Washington Institute of Public Policy analysis found that the Census determines the distribution of more than \$1.5 trillion federal funds annually for essential programs. Many of these programs affect higher education, such as financial aid (including Pell Grants); improvements to campus buildings, labs, and classrooms; research grants; the Library Services and Technology Act; and numerous social and health programs that students rely on. Census data is used to draw districts for federal, state, and local offices, and agencies and organizations of all types establish policy, and to plan programs and services based on the Census results.

To ensure that communities receive their fair share of funding and representation, it's essential that college students—a group that historically has been disproportionately undercounted in the decennial Census—be counted. College students are considered a hard-to-count population, primarily because

they are highly mobile, may live off-campus as renters, and are typically in the age category of 18-to-29 years, which a Pew Center for Research study found is least likely to participate in the Census. Academic libraries are well-positioned on campuses to generate awareness about the Census and to partner with campus groups and organizations on events and activities that promote a complete count of college students. To learn about ways academic libraries can help ensure a fair and accurate Census, see ACRL's "Keeping Up With . . . 2020 Census."

The 2020 Census is the first Census to include the online self-response questionnaire, which can be completed on a smartphone, tablet, or computer in about ten minutes. Individuals can also complete the Census questionnaire by phone or by mail. Although April 1 is designated as Census Day, individuals can complete their Census form before this date, and they should include everyone who will be a usual resident of their household on April 1. The Census counts people at their usual residence, where they live and sleep most of the time. This place is not necessarily the same as a student's "permanent address" in college systems or the address where they are registered to vote.

Achieving a complete Census count is vital to our democracy by making sure that everyone is represented. The more college students know about the Census, how the data is used, and how it impacts them and their communities, the more likely they are to participate. Visit [ala.org/census](http://ala.org/census) to learn more about libraries and the 2020 Census, read tip sheets and the Libraries' Guide to the 2020 Census, download graphics, and view recorded webinars. *TC*

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