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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Department of Education's Agency Information Collection Activities on the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

Offering readily available, transparent data on higher education is vital for fostering trust and transparency with the public. Confidence in US higher education is declining, and in this era of misinformation and rapidly advancing technologies, media and information literacy are more essential than ever. We strongly encourage NCES to uphold the accessibility of data regarding investments in academic libraries, recognizing them as pivotal trusted entities at the forefront of promoting information literacy in the United States.

Libraries play a multifaceted role in the academic ecosystem. They serve as vital hubs for students, offering essential course materials, readings, reserves, and assignments. Beyond mere provision, libraries are instrumental in teaching information literacy skills, equipping students with the ability to navigate and critically evaluate vast pools of information—a skill crucial in today's information-saturated world. Additionally, they serve as indispensable resources for leading research universities, providing access to a plethora of resources, services, and training opportunities that foster academic inquiry and innovation. Their impact extends beyond the classroom; libraries contribute significantly to student learning and achievement, evidenced by their role in preparing students for professional exams and providing support in internships, job placements, and graduate school pursuits. Furthermore, libraries serve as vibrant centers of engagement, often becoming focal points of campus life. Their importance reverberates in faculty circles as well; library holdings and special collections play a pivotal role in faculty recruitment and retention, while librarians themselves contribute to research productivity and support faculty teaching and pedagogy within their disciplines.

Please do not discount the vital role academic libraries play in higher education. The data you collect is instrumental in budgeting and hiring, factors that impact the resources and services available to college students.