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Scholarship

U.S. Research Libraries Search for Ways to Combat Spiraling Subscription Costs of Scholarly Journals

Prices rose 18.2 per cent in 1986-87, study finds; a few publishers account for most of the increase

By JUDITH AXLER TURNER Responding to complaints that publishers of scholarly journals are engaging in "price gouging" and "profiteering," the

to produce journals in direct competition with some of the ones we think are so overpriced."

. . The association will look at options this

Mr. Keller hopes to rouse librarians to urge scholars to reevaluate tenure and promotion policies that depend on the number of articles they publish. "The meaning of 'contribution to knowledge' now has financial implications to the whole community," he says.

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Association of Research Libraries has decided to explore alternative publishing arrangements, including the possibility of having small American publishers begin new journals, to compete with the major. journal publishers. At the same time, colleges and universities are cutting back on subscriptions and exploring ways to cut costs by sharing sub-: ... scriptions among themselves.

The moves come on the heels of a study by the association that found a median rise of 18.2 per cent in journal prices in 1986-87-with the greatest increases coming from a small number of publishers.

Librarians point out that more and more journals-especially those priced over \$200 a year-come from fewer and fewer publishers, most of them overseas. Although the drop in the value of the dollar has hurt libraries, librarians say that subscription prices have risen far more than is warranted by the changing exchange rate. "If the major scientific and technical journals are published by a limited number

summer as part of a study of journal pricing. The study, to be done by professional economists, will determine the effects on subscription prices of currency fluctuactions, inflation, a smaller subscription ... in supporting electronic publishing-the base, and more pages. Publishers say changes in those areas force prices up.

The holdings and expenditures of major research libraries in the United States and Canada are listed on Page A6.

Many librarians believe, however, that publishers are simply trying to charge as much as the market will bear.

Publishers, they say, realize they have a captive audience. Librarians cite a line from a letter sent by one publisher to his company's stockholders: "Historically, libraries have been concerned with the quality of the contents of journals, with the price being of lesser importance."

Part of the problem, says Michael A. Keller, associate university library for collection development at Yale University, is academe itself, which often rewards faculty members for the number of articles they have published, rather than for the quality of the articles.

Yale is one of the universities interested distribution of scholarly articles over computer networks, Mr. Keller says. "The prices of journals are so high that if we can cut the publishers out, we should do so," he adds.

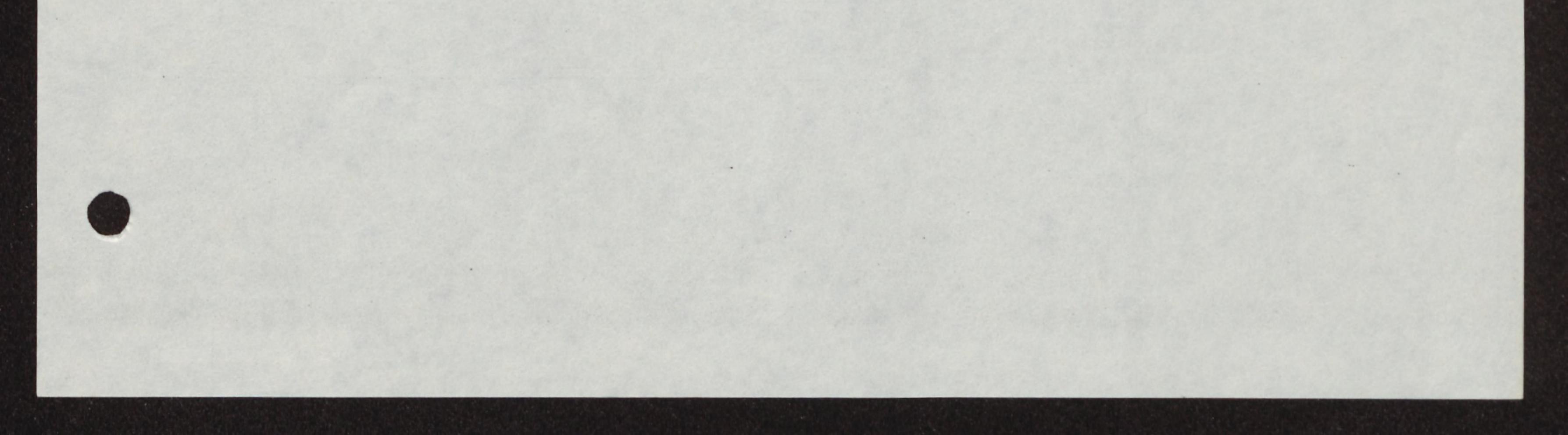
The Research Libraries Group, a consortium of 37 libraries, has polled its members to find out which ones subscribe to what publications, and whether they intend to continue those subscriptions, as a first step in a cooperative effort to develop their collections.

Libraries will then be able to cancel subscriptions with the knowledge that a journal is available elsewhere through interlibrary loans.

Nine universities in the Midwest are also exploring the possibility of sharing their journal collections so each can subscribe to fewer publications.

of publishers, they have a kind of monopoly," says Jeffrey J. Gardner, director of the association's Office of Management Services. "We need to work with other publishers and university presses to begin

In Canada, institutions are banding together to try to work out bulk-purchase arrangements with foreign publishers. Libraries there must cope with a devalued Continued on Page A6



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Libraries Seek Ways to Combat Rising Journal Costs

Continued from Page A4

Canadian dollar. Peter L. Freeman, chieflibrarian at the University of Alberta, points out that Canadian libraries st pay North American prices, which are set in subscr U.S. down's. The dollar currently is valued about 20 per cent higher than its Canadian counterpart.

Dollar's Drop Is a Factor

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Subscriptions to journals range from under \$50 a year to more than \$8,000 for Chem Abstracts, an index of chemistry journals. Publications in ... science and engineering typically

cost the most, in part because the developments in those fields occur so rapidly that scientists and engineers nre dependent on journals-rather than books, with their slower publication cycles-to keep up, and so are more willing to pay higher prices.

Prices have been rising for several years, but they jumped sharply last year because of the drop in the value of the dollar. Most of the high-priced journals are published overseas. For example, subscriptions to Brain Research went from \$2,871 in 1986 to \$3,826 in 1987; Verlag Che-

mie increased prices 61:1 per cent in

1987; und Synthetic Metals went from \$232.50 in 1985 to \$850 in 1987. All are published abroad.

Some Subscriptions Canceled

Not only are subscription-price increases out of line with the dollar's decline, say librarians, but North American subscribers are charged far more than other subscribers, even taking postage charges into account. have some 90,000 subscriptions-The Journal of Plasma Physics costs \$80 in England, where it is published, and \$195 in the United States. World Economy costs \$42 in England .but \$100 in the United States.

University libraries

The most recent comprehensive study, in 1984, put the average differential between European and North American subscription prices at 67 per cent.

To redress the balance between spending on books and journals, libraries are canceling subscriptions. = The libraries at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign saved \$166,000 last year by cutting subscriptions to 1,383 journals in its collections. The university's libraries few of them duplicates after a mass cancellation several years back to hold down costs. The engineering library alone cut 161 journals from the nearly 1,200 in its collections.

The University of California at Berkeley ran \$300,000 over its \$2.5million budget in 1987, and cut the number of serials to which it subscribes by about 10 per cent.

Cornell and Stanford Universitics canceled subscriptions last year when each was faced with possible \$600,000 overruns in its library-materials budget.

The library at the University of Wyoming has asked academic departments to help cut out up to 10 per cent of the periodicals subscriptions to offset increased prices.

"It's a war of attrition," says Richard L. Dougherty, director of the library at the University of Michigan. "Eventually everybody will lose."

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7. Holdingstof Research Libraries in U.S. and Canada

			•			010000100	
	Rank ¹	Volumes . In library	Volumes added	Current	Total staff	Total expenditures	
larvard U	1	11,284,170 .	232,559	102,000	1,030	. \$34,792,739	
at Los Angeles	2	5,625,521	257,027	93,467	730	29.428.949	
at Berkeley	3	7,031,934	206,181	99,065	756	26,998,169	
'ale U	4	8,391,707	160,953	56.412	679	21,855,300	
. of Illinois		7,190,443	193.407	93,913	547	15,346,678	
tanford U. ³	6	5,598,363	167,055	49.780	621	25,852,247	
of Texas		5,753,629 5,563,396	179.838 186.408	79,772 38,922	577 727	16,258,070 20,374,225	
ornell U. ³		4,818,377	136,220	58,722	532	17,517,507	
olumbia U	10	5,625,925	121,276	42,779	624	20,008,645	
of Washington	-11	4,658,911	158,790	55,590	471	16,041,230	
. of Wisconsin	12	4,713,250	101,202	50,607	494	17,253,886	
of Minnesota		4,382,696	112.850	38,630	428	17,881,544	
. of Chicago	14	4,865,137	113,277	53,214	336	13,424,913	
. of North Carolina	15	3,414,643	118,308	44,797	409	13,967,683	
ennsylvania State U.º	16	2,888,342	145,074	29,080	460	14,895,629	
hio State U	16	4,169,610	109,546	31,762	455	15,397,844	
rinceton U	18	3,961,415	109,948	33,140	380	13,762,225	
of Arizona	19	3,239,055	104,623	31.423	366	11.807.837	
. orgia ²		2,604,601	93,871	56,149	383	10,609,060	
		3,591,197	92,215	34.452	319	11,398,777	
U. U. ³		2.407.696	114,490	19.041	465	15.664.381	
. of Pennsylvania		3,442,389	85,949	28,435	372	12,599,830	
. ol California at Davis	24	2,159,570	86,492	50.004	324	12,808,628	
low York U	24	2,920,175	72,755	32,493	367	13,978,558	
I. of Virginia	26	2,902.823	102,177	23.489	341	13,258,591	
rizona State U. ³	27	2,215,376	122,690	31,366	351	11,436,506	
. of British Columbia	28	2,639,439	88,131	22,833	419	11,893,424	
of Alberta ³	29	2,658,752	93,512	21,422 .	401	11,785,086	
orthwestern U	30	3,270,365	80,511	32,304	356	10,650,409	
. of Florida	'31	2,605,601	79,610	29,512	404	10,952,533	
. of Southorn California'	32	2,484,152	57,372	33,071	385	12,685,658	
ohns Hopkins U	33	2,670,600	78,204	20,177	369	10,831,473	
. of lowa	34	2,839,825	89,049		. 259	9,829,382	
. of Kansas	35	2,620,805	70,925	25,745	292	10,197,931	
AcGIII U	36	2,390,943	62,640	18,262	324	10,982,859	
Alchigan State U	36 .	2,431,942	86,578	19,175	320	10.397.545	
. of Maryland	38	1,856,510	83,642	21,756	321	10,934,347	
at San Diego	39	1.810.844	74,428	20,273	316	11,967,176	
loward U.	40	1,618,259	83,680	26,775	262	10,045,835	
of Hawali	41	2,164,497 .	77,653	32,989	220	8.035.702	
lassachusetts Institute		:					
of Technology	42	2,062,818	54,498	21,296	275	9,292,380	
ayne State U.3	43	2,179,666	61,745 .	10.141	255	9,868,092	
yracuse U	.44	2,217.231	64,083 '	21,244	252 .	7,677,311	
. of Massachusetts	45.	2,199,402	71,030		• 236	. 9,825,395	
oston U	46	1,622,336		: mi . 29,177	. 278	8,990,001	
ouisiana State U	47	2,270,617	61,895	23,327	279	8,095,082	
axas A&M U	48 .	1,723.660	69,746;	17.661	1, 311	9,022,614	
of Western Ontario	48	1,895.089	60,069	19,375	304	7,563,768	
eorgetown U	50	1,613,442	66,530	21,035	. 285	9,149,465	
of Cincinnati	. 51	1,581,754	55,650	19,588,1.1	297	10,519,089	
of Connecticut ³	51	2.074.443	65,403	21,349	225	8,701,223	
of California	53	2,006,423	58,707	18,383	248	9,061,297	
at Santa Barbara	54	1.806.039	62,203	15,600	239	10.376,881	
of Kentucky	55 55	2.043.393	54,674 63,237	· 20,759 20,884	266 265	8,282,161 7,350,599	
	57	1,595,553 -	57,785 .				
ashington Li (Mo.)	57	2,120,974	49,487	17,884	270 228	8,466,612	
ashington U. (Mo.)	59	1,711,774	56,985	18,098		8,793,639	
anderbilt U		1,952,593	63,939	16,296	256	8,588,061	
emple U. ³					266	7.128,893	
al Manager	61	. 2,365,235	53,129	17,407	249	6,441,179	
of Missouri		1 206 720	601 03	17 000	001	0.000 100	
of Missouri lifornia at Irvine braska	62 62	1,306,730	68,400 59,785	17.369 23.511	224 206	9.838,430 6,429,384	

Rank ¹	Volumes . In library	Added	Current serials	Total	Total expenditure
U. of South Carolina 64	2,225,572	58,435	19,163	198	\$ 6,152,36
Southern Illinois U 64 .	1,950,400	. 57,135	21,283	246	7,158,73
U. of Delaware 64	.1,778,915	55,450	21,637	207	7,362,96
Brown U 67 . York U. (Ontario) ³ 67	2,065,334	51,046	. 15,470	243	8,225,47
		57,499	18,598	241	7,552,08
Brigham Young U 69 U. of Rochester 69	1,863,224	63,582	17,847	300	7,957,24
U. of Miami	1,576,560	47,245 53,251	13,876	222 243	7,772,43
U. of Colorado 72	2,146,136	58,140	13,755	204	7,181,12
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State U 72	1,593,757	50,541	20,040	205	7,394,90
Iowa State U 74	1,708,592	55,895	20,244	204	6,449,77
U. of Oregon	1,765,633	60,452	20,536	211	6,408,66
Dartmouth C 76	1,664,847	58,869	-20,414	182	6,438,58
U. of Waterloo ³ 77	1,533,271	64,747 :	15,000	206	5,925,79
U. of Utah	1,646,550	58,866	14,348	232	6,814,66
U. of Notre Dame 79	1,794,564	57,460	15,871	180	6,234,61
Tulane U. ³ 80 ·	1,682,060	54,497	15,480	183	6,552,25
Florida State U. ³	1,667,720	45,718	17,699	236	6,657,34
Queen's U. at Kingston 82	1,672,271	56,661 40,470	15,373 15,560	· 224	7,219,18
Washington State U 84	. 1,492,864	38,511	21,098	207	6,773,07
at Stony Brook	1,566,698	.45,382	12,331	216	- 7,268,99
U. of Oklahoma	2,192,100		17,417	198	5,745,84
of Technology 87	1,532,193	68,582	28,805	112	4,154,155
	1.587.838	39,653	14,372.	232	5,909,11
U. of Houston	1,526,291	41,561	22,911	173	5,945,170
at Riverside 90	1,303,872 ::		13,615	179	6,629,95
McMaster U 91.	1,258,534	47.942	11,198	193	6,486,52
U. of Manitoba 91	1,431,307	34,692	12,020	237	6,241,52
	.1.706,238	71,628	10,219	155	4.487,50
State U. of New York	1.693.117	40,867	17,389	176	5.244,023
at Albany 95	1,194,962.	45,333	16,399	174	5.735,90
Case Western Reserve U. 96 .		35,812	13,854	. 174	5,884,393
	4.1.300,773 *-	48,877	10,092	174	5,619,64
U. of New Mexico 98 Kent State U	1,276,889	35,190	10,669	240	6,522,693
Colorado State U 100	1,103,752	34,281	7,349	183 139	6,377,410
Oklahoma State U 101	1,440,780	31,801	10,101	164	
Indiana U	3,881,945	115,003	33,975	521	4,322,554
U. of Michigan n/a	6.019.919	135,011	67,115	548	18,851,310
U. of Pittsburgh n/a '	2.741.834	82,076	. 23,098	332	11,162,154
Rice U n/a State U. of New York	1,323,470	47,935	11,721	145	4,826,953
at Bullalo n/a	2,436,454	/ 72,120 .	24,085	277	9,352,67
		., ,.	, .	1	
	Non-unit			1	
· · · · · · · ·		Volumes added	Current	1 Total staff	Total expenditure
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific	Non-unit Volumes	Volumes	Current		expenditure
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, Ottawa, Ontario ³	Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895	Volumes	Current	staff	expenditure \$24,191,53
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries, Chicago	Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895	Volumes added 239,516	Current serials 16,049	*t#Ħ 655	expenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries, Chicago Library of Congress, Washingon	Non-111111 Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895	Volumes added 239,516 90,717	Current serials 16,049 31,250	*t#Ħ 655 223	•xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries, Chicago Library of Congress, Washingon Linda Hall Library, Kansas City, Mo.	Non-111111 Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895 2,074,181 2,861,183	Volumes added 239,516 90,717 30,711	Current serials 16,049 31,250 13,836	*t#H 655 223 63	•xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63 275,530,000
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information. Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries. Chicago Library of Congress. Washingon Linda Hall Library. Kansas City, Mo. National Agricultural Library. Beltsville, Md. ³	Non-111111 Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895 2,074,181 2,861,183 20,957,228	Volumes added 239,516 90,717 30,711 288,690	Current serials 16,049 31,250 13,836 175,000	*t#H 655 223 63 4,967	•xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63 275,530,00 2,834,68
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information, Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries, Chicago Library of Congress, Washingon Linda Hall Library, Kansas City, Mo National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Md. ³ National Library of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario	Non-111111 Volumes In Ilbrary 5,806,895 2,074,181 2,861,183 20,957,228 594,950	Volumes added 239,516 90,717 30,711 288,690 17,800	Current serials 16,049 31,250 13,836 175,000 13,140	*t * H 655 223 63 4.967 61	•xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63 275,530,000 2,834,68 11,098,000
Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information. Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries. Chicago Library of Congress. Washingon Linda Hall Library. Kansas City. Mo. National Agricultural Library. Beltsville, Md. ³ National Library of Canada. Ottawa, Ontario National Library of Medicine. Bethosda, Md.	Non-111111 Volumes In library 5,806,895 2,074,181 2,861,183 20,957,228 594,950 1,873,874 1,131,621 1,821,644	Volumes added 239,516 90,717 30,711 288,690 17,800 13,771	Current serials 16,049 31,250 13,836 175,000 13,140 27,000	*t * ff 655 223 63 4.967 61 190	•xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63 275,530,000 2,834,68 11,098,000 24,729,639
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Boston Public Library Canada Institute for Scientific and Technical Information. Ottawa, Ontario ³ Center for Research Libraries. Chicago Library of Congress. Washingon Library of Congress. Washingon Linda Hall Library. Kansas City, Mo. National Agricultural Library. Beltsville, Md. ³ National Library of Canada. Ottawa, Ontario National Library of Medicine. Bethosda, Md. Newborry Library, Chicago New York Public Library. New York	Nones In library 5,806,895 2,074,181 2,861,183 20,957,228 594,950 1,873,874 1,131,621 1,821,644 1,412,162	Volumes added 239,516 90,717 30,711 288,690 17,800 13,771 51,595 41,918 9,615	Current serials 16,049 31,250 13,836 175,000 13,140 27,000 20,824 26,837 7,000	*t # H 655 223 63 4,967 61 190 530 273 104	• xpenditure \$24,191,53 17,657,64 2,851,63 275,530,000 2,834,68 11,098,000 24,729,639 17,616,513 5,781,460 24,036,640
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Note: institutions are asked to report figures for their main campusos only, unless a branch campus is indicated. Based on an Index developed by the Association of Research Libraries to measure the relative size of university Ilbraries. The Index takes into account the number of volumes held, number of volumes added, number of current serials, total expenditures, and size of staff. Five institutions chose not to have their index figure calculated; they appear at the end of the list of university libraries.

Figures for Canadian Ilbraries are expressed in U.S. dollars.

³ Includes branches as well as the main institution.

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