

# Naming Academic Libraries: Is Institutional Identity Obscuring the Generous Benefactors and Illustrious Educators of Old?

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Identifying the individuals after whom academic libraries are named reveals interesting patterns. An examination of the libraries at traditionally grouped schools such as Ivy League, Seven Sisters, and Big Ten as well as the authors' home state academic libraries illustrates the varying degrees of how libraries preserve their own history. Additionally, the research reveals that only fifty percent of these libraries are named primarily after alumni, presidents, educators and benefactors. Once named, libraries often experience name changes both officially or by popular usage. The authors propose that some library names change to reflect the current campus culture, while others hold steadfast to their historical naming practices. As libraries struggle to maintain their traditional image and at the same time pursue an identity as a transformative educational force, library names will continue to reflect the institution and community which they serve.

**KEYWORDS** library, academic libraries, benefactors, donors, library names, institutions of higher education

## Introduction

The library is known to many in the academic community as the gateway of information and the preserver of knowledge. Since colonial times, our universities have established various versions of what we know as and call an academic library. In their inception, clergy and respectable gentlemen in the colonies and abroad donated books from their private collections. The earliest historical reference is to a bookcase and

comes from Princeton University in 1750. Even “in the early 1800s collections were small (Harvard in 1827 was 25,000 volumes), access was limited, and financial support was inadequate, as was staff size” (Rogers and McChesney, 1984: 52). Eventually bookcases would evolve into rows of shelving and ultimately into stand-alone buildings as the library continued to increase its presence and power on campus. Nevertheless, even in their earliest manifestations, libraries were not without critics. A Yale historian of the early 1700s documented the role of the library to its users as both serious and frivolous, writing “On the whole, however, the library was not an integral part of the college course of study” (Warch, 1973: 243).

Fortunately for those in higher education, especially librarians, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed the metamorphosis of the academic library into an integral entity enjoying unquestionable support and access to seemingly bottomless coffers. By the mid-1800s, the academic library building had arrived. “The University of South Carolina was a forerunner in 1841 when it erected a separate library building” (Murray, 2009: 175).

With the creation of such an entity representative of the gateway of information, many individuals would want to be associated with this institutional hallmark, considered by individuals on college campuses integral to the academic experience. To have one’s name on the building that serves as the institution’s great preserver of knowledge, fused with the library’s very identity, to be not only memorialized, but immortalized — *ad perpetuam rei memoriam* — is the ultimate honor. But who are the individuals who have had their names framed and chiseled on all possible structures from ivy covered walls to steel, aluminum and glass? Illustrious educators as well as early and visionary presidents, distinguished alumni, local dignitaries, home town heroes, giants of industries, philanthropists, and perhaps even a prominent librarian, seem to be obvious candidates as their accomplishments and legacies (along with the libraries that bear their name) will never be forgotten.

Six years ago the University of Toledo Libraries repurposed the first floor of the main library and created an Information Commons, a concept devised to provide computers and collaborative space for teaching and learning which in turn downsized and relocated the book collection traditionally located on the first floor. This concept was a natural outgrowth of the need for more technology and the increased access to electronic resources, shifting the focus away from the physical structure to a virtual environment. Simultaneously, the University switched how web pages were controlled adopting a single content management system that would standardize the branding of the institution and establish a consistent style. The link to the Library was removed from the institution’s homepage, and the redesign of the William S. Carlson Library’s homepage was stripped of any information pertaining to Mr Carlson’s contribution, legacy, and importance to academic endeavors at the University of Toledo. As the Commons flourished and became an “must stop” on every campus tour, it has been observed that the library has taken on a variety of names such as, the commons, the Information Commons, Carlson, William S. Carlson, and even most recently Club Carlson. It is for this reason that the authors questioned whether this experience at their home institution is unique, common in Ohio, or even occurring nationally. The question is, has the shift of morphing into a virtual library guaranteed the preservation of the given name or produced the opposite effect? A

preliminary analysis seemed to illustrate that some university libraries have elaborate web pages with detailed histories documenting landmark events, the history of their name (in some instances even renaming). However, while locating the online documents of the names and naming history of academic libraries, a surprising fact becomes obvious. The individual library names, original or subsequently amended, whether private or state-supported, whether founded in the 1600s or 1960s, may be disappearing in the virtual environment.

## Literature review

Most of what has been written about the names of academic libraries primarily appears in local campus circulars, alumni magazines, and university or library annual reports. Many times these documents can be located and accessed directly from the institutions or library's homepage. Some university libraries have also constructed elaborate web pages to specifically acknowledge, honor, and document their naming history. In addition, business magazines and newspapers (Byrne, 2002; Sandberg, 2005; Forest, 2006; Taylor, 2008; *International Tax Review*, 2009; *M2PressWIRE*, 2009) have also featured columns that focus on donor recognition, naming ceremonies, and the history of many university building names, including the library. However, while there seems to exist some master's theses (Bobinski, 1955; Baughman, 1956) and articles (Skiffington, 2000; Alexander and Field, 2008) that document individual library histories including their names, there does not appear to be any professional literature beyond more recent examples of the information commons concept (Bonnand and Donahue, 2010; Caniano, 2010) that specifically focuses on the names of libraries or library naming practices.

## Methodology

Initially the authors decided to examine the academic libraries in Ohio in order to determine if naming patterns existed. Although Ohio's 100-plus institutions of higher education represent all types of colleges and universities, from private to state and from single campus to multiple locations, identifying the names of only Ohio academic libraries might not be a sufficient sampling in discovering or determining naming patterns.

Expanding the research would provide more insight. In the discussion of what schools to include, knowing that an examination of every school in the country was not possible, the authors decided to investigate specific schools that have been traditionally classified into groups based on various factors. Whether grouped by year established, geographical location, or even athletic activities, these schools exhibit ideals and standards that are emulated across the nation, often elevated to legendary status. In addition to Ohio institutions of higher education, the authors identified the following six groups: the Ivy League, the Seven Sisters, the Big 10, schools highly recommended for African-American students including historically black schools, colonial schools, and the Top 2010 Ranked Schools by US News and Forbes (see Appendices 1–6 for detailed listings of these traditional academic groups). Several facts worth noting are that, although several schools are listed in more than one

category (e.g. Harvard and Oberlin), each library name was counted only once in order to maintain accuracy when identifying the appropriate qualifiers' category (e.g. Alumni, Donor, Professor, or Alumni and Donor). While some of these groups are permanent due to the common classifying factor (e.g. the colonial schools), others are in flux. For example, the Sisters are no longer Seven, and the Big 10 becomes 12 by 2012. Finally, the research was limited to US schools only, and it was not possible to represent every state.

The authors began data collecting by visiting the institution's web page and noting the school's name, location, and the year it was established. When the libraries and collections were located, all names were noted. If available, the year of the library's establishment or construction was noted. The next step was to identify the individual or individuals after whom the libraries were named. Using the information ascertained regarding the individuals, a qualifier was designated. In all, sixteen specific qualifiers were identified (see Appendix 7). Finally, in order to classify each library or collection, ten discipline areas were also identified (see Appendix 8).

## Findings

Of over the 700 unique libraries identified, only the original Seven Sisters had 100% of their libraries named. Table 1 shows that the other groups fall into a 43% to 61% range of their libraries being named. Big 10 institutions have the least named libraries at 43%, and Ohio has the second to the highest number at 61%.

Interesting to note, the Top Ranked colleges have the most libraries as well as having the most named libraries. The *Total Libraries* column represents the fact that the several schools are listed in more than one category (e.g. Harvard, Oberlin, Brown, etc.). Table 2 illustrates that, of these named libraries, individual alumni and donors constitute the highest percentages of names. Illustrious educators represent the third largest group after whom libraries are named, followed by donors who were also alumni.

As mentioned earlier, the authors identified a discipline area for each library (see Appendix 8). Academic discipline areas ranged from traditionally grouped disciplines, such as Natural Sciences containing biology, chemistry, physics, geology, etc., to stand-alone disciplines such as Law. In addition to academic disciplines, libraries

TABLE 1  
NAMED LIBRARIES AND UNNAMED LIBRARIES OF OHIO AND ACADEMIC GROUPS

	Total libraries	Named	Not named
Ohio	155	94 (61%)	61
Ivy League	202	100 (50%)	102
Black Colleges	185	96 (52%)	89
7 Sisters	12	12 (100%)	0
Big 10	214	93 (43%)	121
Top Ranked	243	119 (49%)	124
Colonial	228	114 (50%)	114

TABLE 2  
 NAMED LIBRARIES ACCORDING TO THE FOUR QUALIFIERS

	Alumni	Donor	Professor	Alumni & Donor
Ohio	12	36	19	6
Ivy League	54	23	24	23
Black Colleges	34	35	26	14
7 Sisters	3	4	2	1
Big 10	34	41	25	17
Top Ranked	57	55	26	27
Colonial	55	49	23	22
Total	249 (40%)	243 (39%)	145 (23%)	110 (18%)

were classified by function including: main, undergraduate and graduate, and Other, which contain collections traditionally housed within the institution's primary library, but typically operate independently under specific guidelines based on their mission (e.g. Archives, Government Documents, and Special Collections). Not counting the catch-all category Other, Figure 1 illustrates that the Natural Sciences represent the highest percentage of libraries per discipline area at 14%. Then Arts, Architecture, Music, Film, and Theatre follow with 11%. The remaining disciplines are in the single digits.

Once the named academic libraries were identified, a pattern regarding the discipline as well as the name itself might be revealed. As shown in Figure 2, the examination of the named discipline libraries reveals that, again, the catch-all category Other leads with a total of 91 named libraries. Equal in number are the main libraries, either undergraduate or graduate specific. The Natural Sciences follow with 52 named libraries, and the Arts group has 40. The remaining named discipline libraries range between 2 and 18.

The last finding worth noting is the composition of the library names themselves. The term library or libraries remain in almost 78% of academic library names. Additional terms do appear with library names: center, resource center, reading room, collections, resources, commons, learning, and technology.

## Results

Identifying the individuals after whom academic libraries are named reveals interesting patterns. Overall, each institution of higher education has developed its own definition of what constitutes a library, a collection, a center, or a reading room. The concept of libraries as opposed to collections is not consistent among libraries. During their research, the authors discovered that names of numerous libraries experienced change, such as names being added, compounded, or dropped. Locating the names of some of the libraries was difficult, and identifying how the person is affiliated with the library or institution proved more challenging than expected.

Most libraries are just called "The Library" and carry the branding as other university entities.

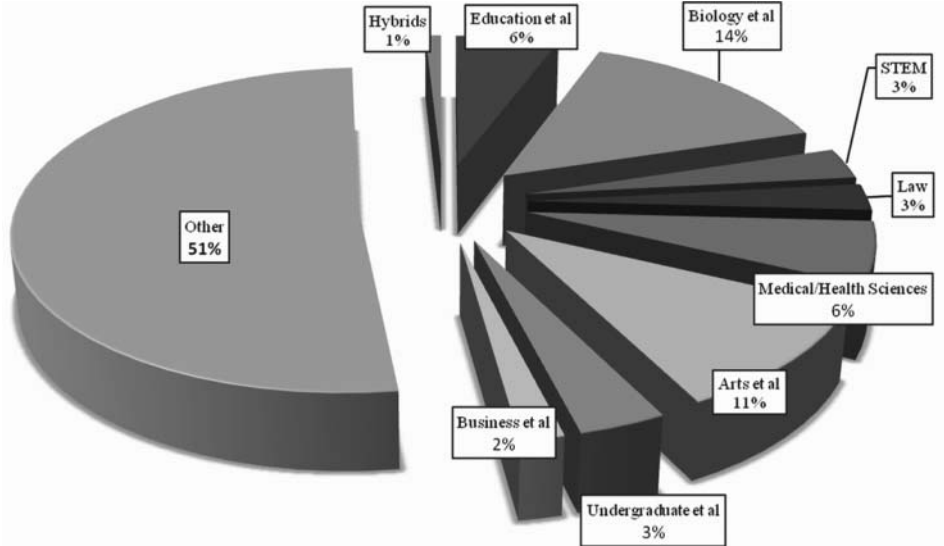


FIGURE 1 The percentage of total libraries by disciplines.

Ten discipline areas:

1. Education, Behavioral Sciences, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Social Sciences, Library Science, Journalism, Communication, History
2. Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, Geology, Arboretum, Maps, Earth Sciences, Life Sciences, Marine Sciences, Astronomy
3. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)+
4. Law
5. Medical/Health Sciences
6. Arts, Architecture, Music, Film, Theatre
7. Undergraduate, graduate, main
8. Business, Economics, Finance
9. Other: Special Collections, Government Documents, etc.
10. Hybrids

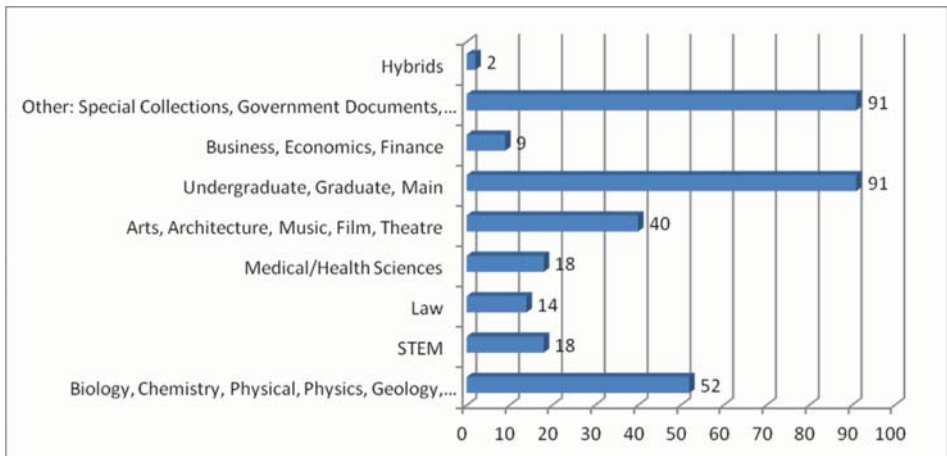


FIGURE 2 The number of named libraries according to the 10 discipline areas.

Courtright Memorial Library at Otterbein was originally known on campus as “The Library” and was even labeled as such with the etched word Library placed above the main entrance, prompting students to label everything — rock, tree, sidewalk, etc. Luckily, this joke ended in 1979, when “Courtright Memorial” was etched along with the word “Library.” (Hill and Grinch, 2008: 11)

Many libraries have assumed nicknames. The John D. Rockefeller, Jr Library at Brown University is known as “the Rock” and undergraduates at the University of Michigan refer to their library as UGLI, Undergraduate Library (Undergraduate = UG, Library = LI). According to reliable informants, the UGLI is also affectionately known as the SNUGLI — though where the “SN” came from nobody knows. It has been discovered through tweets and Facebook postings that Carlson Library at the University of Toledo is nicknamed Club Carlson.

Foundations that have given substantial funds to institutions across the nation have had their names attached to numerous libraries. For example, the Seeley G. Mudd Foundation has endowed and thus is honored with a manuscript library at Princeton, a shelving facility library at Yale, and a science and engineering library at Northwestern. The Kresge Foundation has been instrumental in establishing the business administration library at the University of Michigan, the law library at Notre Dame, and the engineering library at the University of California Berkeley.

Several library names have changed completely over time and their links provided on their web pages labeled as “About Us” have documented this history and name altering. In 2010, Miami University of Ohio celebrated the 100th anniversary of its Alumni Library (now Alumni Hall) dedicated in 1910.

The Alumni Library remained Miami’s main library until King Library was completed in 1966. Alumni Hall was renovated in the early 1990s; today, it is the home of Miami’s Department of Architecture and Interior Design and the Wertz Art & Architecture Library. (Miami University Libraries, 2010)

Similar is the University of Cincinnati, which boasts an elaborate website documenting the library and the evolution of its naming history beginning with the Van Wormer Library dedicated in 1903. This facility became too small in size and ground was broken in 1929 for the Blegen library.

Opened in 1930 as the Main Library, Blegen served in that capacity until 1978 when the new Central Library (now called Langsam Library) was named. Today, Blegen houses the Gorno Memorial Music Library, the John Miller Burnam Classics Library, the Curriculum Resources Center, and the Archives and Rare Books Library. (University Libraries Press Release, 2010)

Carl Blegen was one of the University of Cincinnati’s famous archaeologist and an excavator of Troy. Walter Langsam was a historian and former president at Cincinnati.

Other libraries, however, do not document their naming history and promote themselves in a way that is confusing and lacks continuity of information. Kenyon College brands its library as “Library and Information Services.” Originally the Gordon Keith Chalmers Memorial Library named for a scholar of seventeenth-century English thought and also president of Kenyon, the building also shares its home with

the Olin Library, named in recognition of the gift for its construction from the Franklin W. Olin Foundation in 1986. According to Kenyon's Facilities web page, these "two connected buildings" together constitute "the library" and function as one entity, although they are referred to as Chalmers and Olin Libraries (Kenyon College, 2010). More interesting is that a video tour of the libraries found on its website opens with the phrase "Welcome to the Kenyon College Library."

The first of the Seven Sisters, Mount Holyoke College, is an excellent representation of the current trend of burying the library's name within layers of web pages. A drop-down menu link off the Offices tab on the College homepage reveals a link to Library & Technology (LITS). A click on this link takes one to a page now named Library, Information, & Technology Services. The online catalog appears in a most prominent central location. On the left appears a column of links, one being About LITS. Clicking on this link takes the user further into pages of informational text. Not until one clicks on the link Getting Around in LITS (again, one link ranked in a column of links) does the user discover the appellation Williston and Miles-Smith Library.

The MIT Libraries represent the challenge of the name of the library being shown, but not explained. Although the library for Management and Social Sciences named the Dewey Library is clearly and prominently displayed on its home page, no explanation is found that identifies which Dewey is honored. The authors who are librarians might first assume Melvil Dewey; but this was not likely. Since MIT is not located in New York, the probability of honoring Thomas E. Dewey was even more unlikely. While Social Sciences rarely include the study of Education, John Dewey was still a possibility. After contacting an acquaintance at MIT, the authors' library colleague relayed that this Dewey is in fact David Rich Dewey, a former chair of the MIT's Department of Economics. This acknowledgement is preserved on the Department of Economics' Facebook page. One side note: Davis Rich Dewey was in fact the older brother of John Dewey.

Finally, an examination of Harvard, considered by many to be the epitome of academe, reveals that this colonial, Ivy League, and top-ranked school, if judged solely by the presence of its libraries in the virtual environment, deserves its prominent position. Harvard exhibits practically all of the patterns and challenges encountered during this research: branding, named libraries hovering at 50%, name changes, additions, alternate names, nicknames, extensively preserved histories as well as elusive ones. The Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine is known as Countway Library of Medicine on its homepage and singularly Countway in literature and usage. This entity is also known as the Harvard Medical School Library, which leaves no doubt that this is Harvard, a school that values its heritage by preserving the important role its library has played throughout the years.

## Conclusion

Librarians, as the gatekeepers and organizers of knowledge, populate a profession that exemplifies classifying and categorizing (employing phrases such as authority control and uniform titles). However, there seems to be no consistent naming



practice. While some libraries do an excellent job of branding themselves, preserving and promoting their name, and in some cases their naming history on their institutional and own homepages, others totally omit this information, including these authors' library homepage.

An examination of the libraries at traditionally grouped schools such as Ivy League, Seven Sisters, and Big Ten, as well as the authors' home state academic library consortium, reveals the varying degrees of how libraries preserve their own history about their presence on campus including location and collections. Often included in this documentation is how libraries are named and, inadvertently, how they choose to preserve the rich history of the naming process of both the libraries themselves and collections.

As libraries struggle to maintain their traditional image and at the same time pursue an identity as a transformative educational force on their respective campuses, it appears that to some degree individual institutions are determining the importance and fate of library naming, including its name erasure. Some, it would appear, have even decided to shed the word library altogether, migrating toward a learning or information commons. Others have become resource centers, while some have simply remained "The Library" either by choice, institutional branding demands, or perhaps due in part to the lack of philanthropic resources. Despite these findings and the fact that half of the libraries examined remain nameless, the practice of naming libraries is still occurring. A \$25 million gift from alumni Joe and Rika Mansueto supported the construction of a new library at the University of Chicago in 2008. That same year also saw the dedication of the Barbara and Mike Bass Library/Community Resource Center at Lorain County Community College, Lorain, Ohio. In his dedication speech, Mike Bass noted that the library was selected because "having named everlasting funds was very ego massaging." Bass admits experiencing personal gratification based on his belief that the library would retain his name — *ad perpetuam rei memoriam* — and in doing so, he as well as his wife would be immortalized. Had Bass been aware of the shifting naming patterns at academic libraries, he might have declared that altruistic motives alone compelled the donation of funds needed to construct the new library. Most recently, billionaire and industrialist Wilbur Ross's gift of \$10 million dollars will fund the library at Yale's School of Management. This compliments the December 2010 announcement of the \$50 million dollar donation given by Edward P. Evans for the School of Management.

The concerns of naming buildings on a campus may apply to more than just the library. Further research may reveal that libraries are not unique in their naming practices. This first study, limited in scope, illustrates that in some instances the founding library name has been maintained, while in others the name's permanency appears not to come with a forever guarantee. However, there is no way to know how these naming, renaming, and creation of vernacular titles will continue to change with the perception of the library as part of the academic community.

## Appendix 1

<b>The Ivy League</b>	
Date established	Current university name <i>(original name of institution)</i>
1636	Harvard Cambridge, Massachusetts
1701	Yale New Haven, Connecticut
1746	Princeton <i>(Collegiate School)</i> Princeton, New Jersey
1754	Columbia <i>(King's College)</i> New York City, New York
1755	University of Pennsylvania <i>(College of Philadelphia)</i> Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1764	Brown <i>(College of Rhode Island)</i> Providence, Rhode Island
1769	Dartmouth Hanover, New Hampshire
1865	Cornell Ithaca, New York

## Appendix 2

<b>Seven Sisters</b>	
Date established	Current university name <i>(original name of institution)</i>
1837	Mount Holyoke <i>(Mount Holyoke Female Seminary)</i> South Hadley, Massachusetts
1865	Vassar College Poughkeepsie, New York
1875	Wellesley College <i>(Wellesley Female Seminary)</i> Wellesley, Massachusetts
1875	Smith College Northampton, Massachusetts
1879	Radcliffe College <i>(The Harvard Annex)</i> full integration with Harvard in 1999 Cambridge, Massachusetts
1885	Bryn Mawr College Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
1889	Barnard College New York City, New York

## Appendix 3

### Big 10

Date established	Current university name (original name of institution)
1817	University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Michigan
1820	Indiana University Bloomington (State Seminary) Bloomington, Indiana
1847	University of Iowa Iowa City, Iowa
1848	University of Wisconsin — Madison Madison, Wisconsin
1851	Northwestern University Evanston, Illinois
1851	University of Minnesota Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota
1855	Michigan State University East Lansing, Michigan
1855	The Pennsylvania State University Joined in 1990 University Park, Pennsylvania
1867	University of Illinois at Urbana — Champaign (Illinois Industrial University) Champaign and Urbana, Illinois
1869	Purdue University West Lafayette, Indiana
1870	The Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio

## Appendix 4

### Top 50 Colleges for Black Students\*

Date established	Current university name
1867	Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia
1861	Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia
1881	Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia
1867	Howard University, Washington, D.C.
1915	Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana
1890	Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, Florida
1891	Stanford University, Palo Alto, California
1754	Columbia University, New York, New York
1792	Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
1865	Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia
1636	Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

<b>Top 50 Colleges for Black Students*</b>	
Date established	Current university name
1838	Duke University, Durham, North Carolina
1858	Berea College, Berea, Kentucky
1793	Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts
1795	University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina
1833	Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio

\* <<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0771723.html>>

Based on responses from nearly 1855 African-American professionals in higher education, Black Enterprise magazine has ranked the top 50 colleges and universities where African-American students are most likely to succeed. The ranking considers factors such as black population (at least 3%), academic strengths, social environment, and graduation rates. (<[www.blackenterprise.com](http://www.blackenterprise.com)>)

## Appendix 5

<b>Colonial Libraries*</b>	
Date established	Current university name <i>(original name of institution)</i>
1636	Harvard Cambridge, Massachusetts
1693	William & Mary Williamsburg, Virginia
1701	Yale New Haven, Connecticut
1746	Princeton <i>(Collegiate School)</i> Princeton, New Jersey
1754	Columbia <i>(King's College)</i> New York City, New York
1755	University of Pennsylvania <i>(College of Philadelphia)</i> Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1764	Brown <i>(College of Rhode Island)</i> Providence, Rhode Island
1766	Rutgers <i>(Queen's College)</i> New Brunswick, New Jersey
1769	Dartmouth Hanover, New Hampshire

\* As identified in "The Collegiate Libraries of the American Colonies," *The University Library in the United States*, Arthur T. Hamlin. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1981, 3–21.

## Appendix 6

Top Ranked Universities*	
Date established	Current university name (original name of institution)
1636	Harvard Cambridge, Massachusetts
1746	Princeton ( <i>Collegiate School</i> ) Princeton, New Jersey
1701	Yale New Haven, Connecticut
1754	Columbia ( <i>King's College</i> ) New York City, New York
1891	Stanford Palo Alto, California
1755	University of Pennsylvania ( <i>College of Philadelphia</i> ) Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
1891	California Institute of Technology ( <i>Throop University</i> ) Pasadena, California
1861	Massachusetts Institute of Technology Cambridge, Massachusetts
1769	Dartmouth Hanover, New Hampshire
1838	Duke ( <i>Union Institute</i> ) Durham, North Carolina
1890	University of Chicago Chicago, Illinois

\*2010 — determined by US News & World Report and Forbes

## Appendix 7

16 Specific Qualifiers	
Alumnus/a	Geographical location
Benefactor/Donor	Librarian
Professor	Chair — Department
President	Foundation
Dean	Local Individual/Family
Trustee	Honorary
Founder	Provost
Director	Clergy

## Appendix 8 Ten Discipline Areas

1. Education, Behavioral Sciences, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Social Sciences, Library Science, Journalism, Communication, History
2. Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, Geology, Arboretum, Maps, Earth Sciences, Life Sciences, Marine Sciences, Astronomy
3. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics)+
4. Law
5. Medical/Health Sciences
6. Arts, Architecture, Music, Film, Theatre
7. Undergraduate, graduate, main
8. Business, Economics, Finance
9. Other: Special Collections, Government Documents, etc.
10. Hybrids

+ The acronym STEMM is also used to represent these disciplines with the second M representing Medicine. For the purposes of this study, Medicine was grouped with Health Sciences.

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