



Allegheny County
**Library
Association**
CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

2024 IMPACT REPORT

SERVING EVERY COMMUNITY, SUPPORTING EVERY STORY



2024 IMPACT REPORT

In 2024, the Allegheny County Library Association (ACLA) placed a strong focus on developing and growing programs that benefit all of Allegheny County residents. ACLA member libraries are the heart of every thriving community in Allegheny County and are unique institutions that stand as a testament to the power of knowledge, connection, and shared human experience. Far from being only a place for books, today's libraries are dynamic, essential hubs, embodying the theme "Serving Every Community, Supporting Every Story." They are open spaces, freely accessible to all, providing vital resources and fostering an environment where every individual, regardless of background or circumstance, can learn, grow, and find their place.

Libraries serve as crucial pillars of educational equity. For lifelong learners, they provide workshops, lectures, and resources on everything from career development to personal enrichment. They are safe havens for children, fostering a love of reading from an early age through vibrant story times and engaging programs, laying the groundwork for future academic success and critical thinking. For students, they offer invaluable access to research materials and quiet study spaces, bridging the digital divide with free internet access and computer workstations.

In 2024, thanks to a generous allocation from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD), Allegheny County libraries received brand new staff and patron computers at no charge to the libraries. This gift, which brought the highest quality computers to all libraries, helped our libraries to serve each of their communities to the highest standards of technology. Every community deserves to have access to the technology tools they need to succeed, and this allocation of funds to acquire these computers will benefit our communities for years to come.

Beyond education, libraries are vital engines of community support. They offer a lifeline for vulnerable populations, providing access to social services information, job search assistance, and even mental health resources. ACLA's Community Support Services helps our communities gain access to the help they need through our Social Workers in Libraries Program. This program, which brings social work students into the library setting, helps our communities to not

only get the assistance they need to enrich the lives of its citizens, but also brings together community resources that can benefit all. ACLA libraries are places of refuge during times of crisis, offering warmth, light, and connectivity when other services may be disrupted. For new immigrants, libraries are often the first point of contact for understanding local resources, practicing language skills, and finding a sense of belonging in a new land. Our communities are stronger when libraries exist, and Allegheny County libraries are bringing this level of dedication to service every day.

ACLA understands the importance of making sure that our libraries support every story. Allegheny County libraries are champions of intellectual freedom, offering a diverse range of perspectives and ideas without censorship, allowing individuals to explore, question, and form their own informed opinions. They provide a platform for local authors and artists, preserving community histories and narratives for future generations. ACLA encourages all of our member libraries to highlight the beautiful diversity of Allegheny County and to give everyone the opportunity to share their stories so that we all have the chance to learn and grow from each other.

In an increasingly fragmented world, libraries stand as unifying forces. They are places where barriers dissolve, where digital divides are bridged, and where the rich tapestry of human experience is not only preserved but actively celebrated. ACLA is proud to serve our communities and will forever encourage everyone to share their stories, in the hopes that by doing so, we can build a stronger Allegheny County that can benefit from our libraries for generations to come.

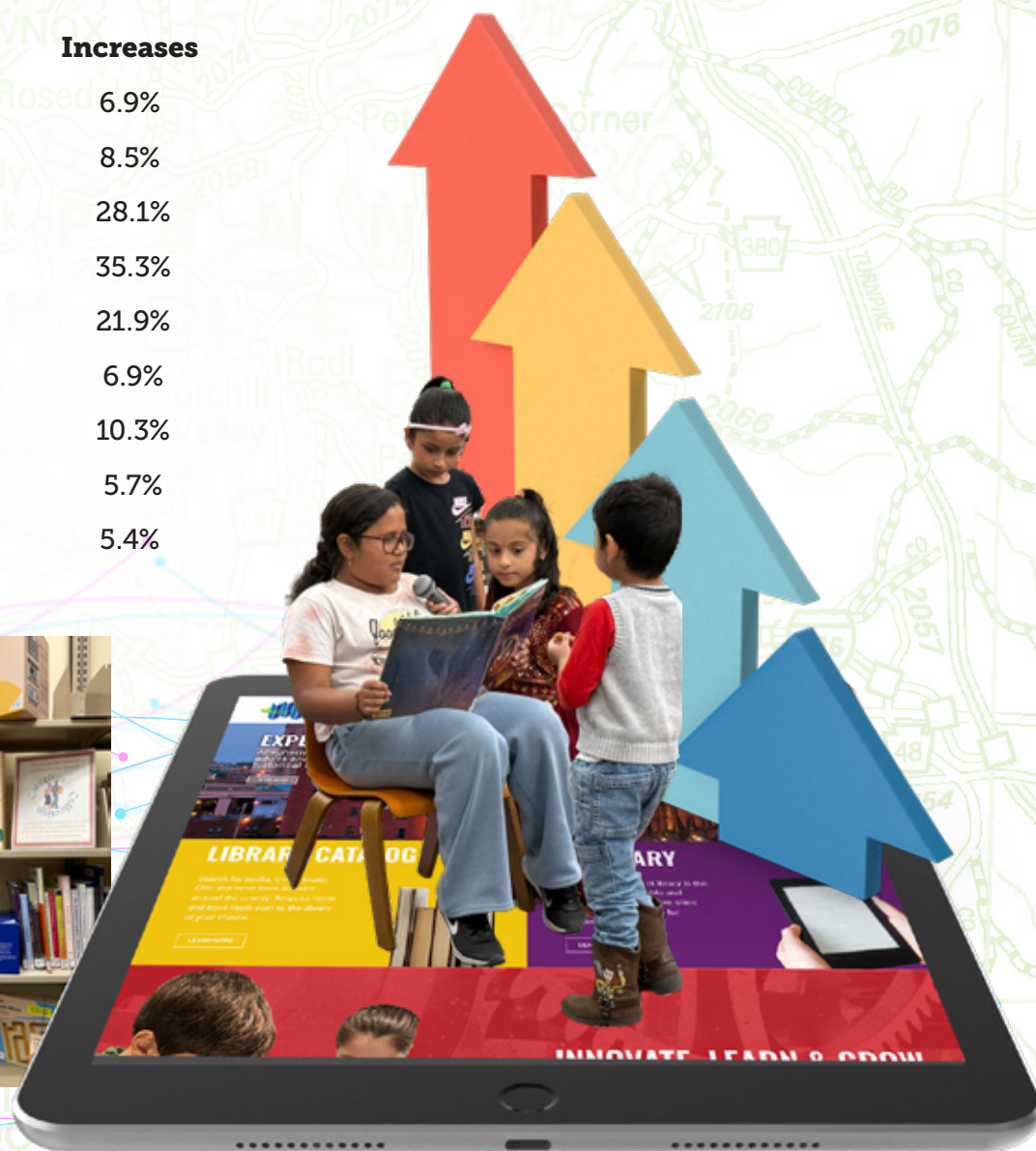


Amy Anderson
CEO
Allegheny County Library Association

TRENDING IN THE UP DIRECTION

Public libraries throughout Allegheny County continue to grow in popularity and serve as valuable assets within the communities. Residents of all ages are utilizing the vast number of resources and programs to learn and explore. As in previous years, 2024 activity has increased—by double digits in some areas—as libraries continue to evolve and serve patrons in diverse ways. Take a look at the numbers.

	2024	2023	Increases
Computer Logins	608,586	569,038	6.9%
Computer Minutes	28,620,814	26,381,952	8.5%
Wi-Fi Logins	1,660,115	1,296,008	28.1%
Wi-Fi Minutes	78,961,172	58,346,646	35.3%
eCirculation	3,601,842	2,954,330	21.9%
Total Circulation	12,387,140	11,589,691	6.9%
Visits	4,652,355	4,219,762	10.3%
Programs	37,228	35,215	5.7%
Program Attendance	712,829	676,107	5.4%





NURTURING OUR YOUNG

ACLA and its member libraries have expanded its services and resources for our young community members and their parents. ACLA's Youth Services offer a variety of unique learning and exploration opportunities inside and outside of the library walls. Here are some of our 2024 Youth Services highlights.

EXPANDING OUR CHILDREN'S READING OPPORTUNITIES

ACLA's libraries and several schools have partnered to celebrate and promote two popular reading programs for our youth - Children's Choice Awards (CCA) and Picture Book Children's Choice Awards (PBCCA).

The CCA is hosted annually by the ACLA and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) and celebrates reading, while encouraging students in grades 3-6 to read three of the titles to attend the culminating event.

A committee, made up of representatives from ACLA, AIU, Spark Books, Bethel Park Public Library and Northland Public Library chose the following eight titles.

- *Control Freaks* by J.E. Thomas
- *Don't Trust the Cat* by Kristen Tracy
- *Lasagna Means I Love You* by Kate O'Shaughnessy
- *Lo and Behold* by Wendy Mass
- *Nothing Else but Miracles* by Kate Albus
- *The Book No One Wanted to Read* by Richard Ayode
- *The Museum of Lost and Found* by Leila Sales
- *You Are Here, Connecting Flights* by Ellen Oh

The 2024 CCA winning title was *Lasagna Means I Love You* by Kate O'Shaughnessy.



Participants attended the culminating event, which was hosted at Commonwealth Charter Academy in Homestead and featured keynote author Ann E. Burg. More than 500 students from 17 Allegheny County school districts, one charter school and six school districts from outside of Allegheny County attended the event.

ACLA also hosts a program for students in grades K-2. The Picture Book Children's Choice Awards is similar to the CCA, allowing the students to vote on their favorite title. Last year's winner was *Bad Drawer* by Seth Fishman and friends.

In addition, the Office of Commonwealth Libraries provides materials for the Pennsylvania One Book Initiative. This program highlights the importance of early literacy development in young children and the significance of reading early and often to children, as well as engaging them in conversation and other activities around books. The 2024 title was *Slug in Love* by Rachel Bright.



SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES UNITE

Students with access to the public library are more likely to succeed in school, develop a lifelong love of reading and continue to use the library into adulthood. However, not every student has a library card. To remove barriers, the Allegheny County Library Association initiated the school library card program.

In the last 4.5 years, more than 50,000 students in 17 school districts across Allegheny County have received library cards.

Sixteen of these districts received full-access, physical library cards. These students have access to all materials provided by the public library with no limitations and these cards are also fine free.

One district provided digital cards to the high school students, which allowed access to all eResources and the option of receiving a full-access card upon visiting the library. Those participating libraries all saw an increase in circulation and eResources usage.

The program is receiving accolades from many of the partners.

"Thank you so much for providing my students with library cards this year! I have seen a substantial uptick in my students' use of the books and other educational materials that you offer the community. Their lessons have dramatically improved and their understanding of the availability of resources is a lifelong skill they are developing."

—Baldwin Whitehall School District teacher

NO SUCH THING AS TOO SOON

Many parents do not realize that learning and kindergarten readiness begins at birth. A study by Zero to Three found 45% of parents believe "the benefits of reading together start two years old or older" when in fact "children's language skills benefit from reading with parents and caregivers beginning at about six months old."

Libraries are in a key position to help educate new and expectant parents about the importance of reading and learning with your child, regardless of their age.

The Baby Bag project started in the Jefferson Regional Foundation footprint with Kids Plus Pediatrics. Bags were created at ACLA and distributed to parents at the one-month visit. The goals were to create awareness of the public library and to educate parents about the importance of early literacy and reading to their child.

Successful, yet hard to track whether patients were visiting a library, the Foundation funded another round for

libraries in the area, followed by multiple rounds with the Grable Foundation for the rest of the County. The goals remained the same, but the project was executed on a smaller scale within each of their library communities. Some partnered with local organizations and others provided incentives for parents to return to the library to attend baby story time or get a library card.

To date, 27 libraries have started programs and eight of those have created multiple rounds of bags, developed programs to support them and collaborated with partners in their community to distribute and promote.

Each bag contains related items like books, manipulatives, and other resources for parents; however, each is individualized to the specific library. These items and resources will extend the work in baby programming to the home and give parents the confidence to be an active participant in their baby's learning.



STORYWALKS®: LITERACY ON THE MOVE

The Allegheny County Library Association launched the ACLA StoryWalk® Collection in 2022 after seeing the program become increasingly popular at libraries across the county during the pandemic. ACLA created the collection of StoryWalks® so that all libraries could offer this program to their communities, which for some might be cost-prohibitive or too labor-intensive.

The concept of a StoryWalk® was created by Anne Ferguson in Montpelier, VT at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. StoryWalks® started as laminated pages of a children's book attached to wooden stakes and installed along an outdoor path. The titles in the ACLA StoryWalk® Collection are scanned and printed on coroplast signs to be used inside or outside and in temporary or permanent displays.

The ACLA StoryWalk® Collection includes more than 40 titles and continues to grow. Titles include favorites such as *Llama Llama Red Pajama*, *The Day the Crayons Quit* and *Dragons Love Tacos*, among many others, as well as bilingual stories. StoryWalks® are also used by schools and organizations.

While a StoryWalk® makes reading the book more interactive by walking page by page through the story, it also encourages engagement and educates the adult about the early literacy skills and the importance of reading.

SOOOO MUCH TO OFFER

Allegheny County libraries continue to evolve and expand the number of services, programs and events each one offers throughout the year. As a result, ACLA launched the LibraryCalendar, a new program calendar service to connect library patrons with the right programs for them.

Located on the ACLA website, patrons can easily search the hundreds of events every month: book clubs, story times, movie nights, STEAM programs, crafternoons, author talks, and more!

LibraryCalendar was created by software and design firm LibraryMarket, and is a responsive, fully integrated event and room management system for libraries.

Users can filter programs by age group, program type, or library branch, or search by keyword. With color coded categories, it's easy to see what events you might be interested in at a glance. Filtered calendar views can also be easily printed.

The new library calendar is mobile-friendly with a responsive design and clean, modern interface so it's easy to look up library programs while you're on the go.



WE'LL BRING THE LIBRARY TO YOU

Bookmobiles are a vital part of public library services, bringing access to information and resources for lifelong learning to preschoolers, seniors and all community members when visiting a physical library location is difficult.

ACLA's three bookmobiles service a wide variety of populations. The senior route caters to older adults. The preschool route delivers services exclusively to Head Start programs and select daycares. The community route services locations that don't have a library. ACLA also assists larger libraries in reaching their outlying populations.

For the preschoolers, each bookmobile visit includes a story-time, followed by a visit out to the bookmobile to select their own book to read in their classroom. Our senior bookmobile delivers requested materials to senior high rises and assisted living facilities as well as book trucks loaded with various large print, non-fiction, and A/V materials to supplement their requests.

ACLA's bookmobiles continue to be a popular alternative to the traditional library. The stats below tell the story of our efforts in 2024.

- Total Miles Traveled – **17,546**
- Total Miles Traveled to Senior/Preschool facilities – **11,168**
- Preschool Classrooms Visited – **64**
- Senior Facilities Visited – **51**
- Community Stops in Allegheny County – **5**
- Increase in Visits since 2023 – **10.1%**
- Increase in Circulation since 2024 – **3.5%**



TALENT BANK

In 2024, ACLA saw the continued success of its The Talent Bank – a resource that has helped local libraries acquire the interest and talents of community members to serve in leadership positions.

Since the inception of the program in 2021, ACLA and its 46 member libraries have acquired several new community representatives who are providing strong leadership and representation on our local library boards.

While librarians and library staff are the faces you see behind the reference desk, library boards provide the strategic vision that is crucial for their library's long-term success. ACLA's library boards, and the volunteer committees are in a unique position to serve their communities, and it is essential that library leadership reflects the richness and diversity of those communities.

Those interested can visit ACLA's website and submit an expression of interest. An individual's information will be sent to their local library for consideration. Libraries will independently reach out to each applicant to discuss volunteer opportunities for boards and/or committees.

Library boards often have a range of subcommittees for individuals to serve. Board and committee service are on a voluntary basis and do not offer financial compensation. Those interested should visit ACLA's website for more information – aclalibraries.org.



DIVE INTO HISTORY AT THE LIBRARY

The Allegheny County Library Association sponsors several history programs that connect our library patrons with the past. Users can visit a local historical site with an Experience Kit, connect to history through play with an American Girl® Doll, or hear the stories of Black leaders in their own words with HistoryMakers, and it is all free with your library card!



EXPERIENCE KITS

Thanks to a partnership with the Heinz Center Affiliates Program (HCAP), Allegheny County libraries are offering free admission for two adults and six children to several museums and historical sites around Pittsburgh.

Participating historical sites include facilities such as the Senator John Heinz History Center, Fort Ligonier and the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum. Each pass can be checked out for up to one week at a time and comes with virtual access to educational information, itinerary ideas, and other fun content.

The Experience Kit program is being coordinated through the Heinz History Center's Affiliates Program (HCAP), which includes more than 125 regional historical societies and organizations dedicated to preserving local history. The Affiliate Program members include history, genealogy, and library organizations located primarily within the counties of Western Pennsylvania.

AMERICAN GIRL® DOLL LENDING LIBRARY

Since 2014, the Allegheny County Library Association's American Girl® Doll Lending Library has been connecting children with history and creative play.

Each doll kit contains the doll with accompanying outfit; a doll bed, pillow, and blanket; a corresponding book; hairbrush; journal; letter to the child; and a letter to the parent/guardian. The kit also contains a brochure, prepared especially for this project by the Senator John Heinz History Center, describing what Pittsburgh was like in the doll's time period.

While some libraries in the county have dolls on-hand and ready to check out, children can also request dolls to be sent to any library location through the library catalog.

The Lending Library was created with dolls that were either donated or purchased through monetary donations.



THE HISTORYMAKERS

The Allegheny County Library Association is proud to provide library cardholders with access to *The HistoryMakers*, the nation's largest African American video oral history archive.

A 501(c)(3) non-profit educational institution, *The HistoryMakers* is committed to preserving, developing and providing easy access to an internationally recognized archival collection of thousands of African American video oral histories. By recording the stories of both the well-known and unsung African Americans from diverse backgrounds, *The HistoryMakers* seeks to preserve and elevate the cultural equity of the African American community to the level of its historical record, as well as to increase the cultural understanding of present and future generations.

Institutions, including K-12 schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, corporations, the media, and the general public, are all users of *The HistoryMakers* content.

A TRUE TEAM EFFORT

ACLA and its member libraries are grateful for the continued support and commitment from our partners. Their investments and commitment from the following organizations help make a significant impact on our communities.

- Achieva
- Allegheny County Department of Human Services
- Allegheny County Parks
- Allegheny Intermediate Unit
- Allegheny Land Trust
- Carlow University
- Casa San Jose
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
- Columbus Metropolitan Library
- KDKA-TV
- Kids Plus Pediatrics
- League of Women Voters of Greater Pittsburgh
- Library Juice Academy
- Millie's Homemade Ice Cream
- OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates
- PAAR (Pittsburgh Action Against Rape)
- Pittsburgh Marathon
- Remake Learning
- Senator John Heinz History Center
- Spark Books
- Trying Together
- University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work
- VoteRiders
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy



LOVE IS IN THE AIR...AND IN THE LIBRARIES

Allegheny County's Love Your Library campaign once again shattered the record book with \$1.71 Million Raised in September.

Each year, the Jack Buncher Foundation provides \$200,000 in matching funds to support literacy, upgrade library facilities and enhance learning through popular programs

The 2024 campaign is a 31% increase from the previous year. Of this amount, more than \$977,902, the largest amount of eligible funds ever raised, qualifies for a prorated match by the Jack Buncher Foundation.

Now in its ninth year, the county-wide Love Your Library campaign continues to raise money to support essential services libraries provide, including books and materials, support for job seekers, facility improvements, and much, much more.

More than 9,400 donors contributed to the campaign, including 1,526 new supporters, which are also record-breaking numbers for the campaign.

Since its inception in 2016, Love Your Library has helped Allegheny County libraries raise more than \$10 million during the annual September fund drive. The campaign coincides with the American Library Association's National Library Card Sign-Up Month.

OUR LIBRARIES CAN'T BE AS RAD WITHOUT RAD

The Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD) provides grants to Allegheny County's libraries, parks and trails, arts and cultural organizations, regional attractions, sports and civic facilities, and public transit. RAD's revenue comes from half of the proceeds of an additional one percent sales and use tax in Allegheny County.

ACLA and its member libraries are grateful for the support of RAD for its annual funding, but also for its contributions to specific programs that make a positive impact on the residents of Allegheny County. Here are two programs making a change.

RAD SUMMER STAYCATION

RAD unveiled the Summer Staycation program that will provide Allegheny County library card holders access to RAD-funded attractions that typically charge for daily admission. RAD Summer Staycation will also highlight additional free summertime events taking place at the RAD assets.

Starting in May and running through August of each year, Allegheny County library card holders are eligible to book 100,000+ free admissions using their RAD Pass.

Attractions include:

- The Andy Warhol Museum
- Carnegie Museum of Art
- Carnegie Museum of Natural History
- Carnegie Science Center
- Children's Museum of Pittsburgh
- The Frick Pittsburgh
- Senator John Heinz History Center
- Mattress Factory
- National Aviary
- Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens
- Pittsburgh Botanic Garden
- Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium
- Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum



RAD MAKES \$3.1 MILLION INVESTMENT IN PCS

Last year, RAD provided much-needed computer replacements and upgrades at public libraries across Allegheny County.

The \$3,123,075 grant was used to purchase 2,464 new personal computers, which will replace out-of-date PCs at every library currently funded by RAD and within the Allegheny County Library Association.

Beyond the grant, RAD is the largest funder of libraries in the Pittsburgh region with a \$40.3 million allocation to libraries in 2024. A competitive bidding process led eiNetwork, the IT service arm for public libraries in Allegheny County to select Lenovo as the supplier of the new computers, servers and monitors.

In the past half-decade, as virtual work and schooling sessions have proliferated, library computers have taken on added importance for patrons.

The order will include 1,643 all-in-one units, 515 laptops, 306 desktops, 262 monitors and 78 servers.



INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITY LIBRARIES

ACLA and its member libraries are gracious for the continued support from our trusted foundations who allow us to implement valuable project-specific programming and events. These community investments help to provide essential services and resources for all Allegheny County residents.

EDEN HALL

\$117,000 (2022-2025)

Continued funding for student stipends and funded two years of salary for ACLA's Social Work Program Coordinator position

\$40,000 (2022-2024)

Supplemental funding for administration of the RAD Transformative Community Libraries Fund and training opportunities for grant-eligible libraries

GRABLE FOUNDATION

\$76,500 (2022-2024)

Funding for one year of Books & Beyond and two years of Baby Bags and student library cards

HILLMAN FOUNDATION

\$150,000 (2021-2023)

Established a full-time social work program coordinator position, and funding for student stipends for two years

JACK BUNCHER FOUNDATION

\$35,000

Funding for Book & Beyond giveaways at community events

PITTSBURGH FOUNDATION

\$28,000 (2023-2024)

Funding for Baby Bags

\$5,000 (2023-2024)

Funding for StoryWalks®

GOVERNMENT PA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, KEYSTONE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

\$137,568 (2022-2024)

Capital improvements for library facilities to make them more accessible

PA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

\$50,000 (2022-2023)

Support for library workforce development projects

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David English, President

(East Region Representative through 2024, 1st Term)

Paul Wittman, Vice President

(South Region Representative through 2024, 1st Term)

F. Charles Spence, Treasurer

(ARAD Representative through 2025, 1st Term)

Nicole Henline, Secretary

(LAC Representative through 2025, 1st Term)

Aliya Khan

(At Large Representative through 2024, 2nd Term)

Paul Kohberger

(West Region Representative through 2024, 1st Term)

Cynthia Potter

(North Region Representative through 2025, 1st Term)

Amber Spells

(At Large Representative through 2025, 1st Term)

Vacant

(Central Region Representative through 2026, 1st Term)

2024 EXPENSES BREAKDOWN

**12.5%
Collection**

**23.5%
Other**

**64.0%
Staff**





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aclalibraries.org

