

**An invitation to apply for the position of**



**President  
Chicago, Illinois**

**THE SEARCH**

[CRL, the Center for Research Libraries](#), seeks a visionary and collaborative professional to be its next president. This is an opportunity to lead and grow one of the most visible and important organizations in the library field, at a consequential time for the profession.

An international consortium of more than 200 college, university, and independent research libraries, CRL works in service to—and convenes the expertise and capacity of—its member organizations. To this end, CRL collects and preserves less commonly-held and difficult-to-acquire scholarly materials that are loaned to members through interlibrary loan and digital delivery; develops shared print and digital research collections of global scope; offers programs on innovations in digitization, licensing, and shared print; convenes specialists and scholars to pool knowledge and resources; and provides tools and services that support research at member institutions and minimize or optimize the burden of local acquisition, processing, and storage. CRL serves as the home of [NERL](#), which pursues the best licensing terms and prices for electronic resources for its members, as well more than a dozen global resources programs for collecting and collections expertise in specific world regions or areas of focus.

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the next president will develop and advance a strategic and sustainable vision for the organization. The President will ensure that CRL serves as a trusted and valuable source of materials, services, community facilitation, and thought leadership for the library field, at a moment rife with technological disruption, societal change, and financial pressure. The ideal candidate will have substantive knowledge of the requirements and best practices of research libraries, including digital and AI strategies; a history of astute organizational leadership; experience working with a board and stakeholders with distinct institutional cultures and requirements; and a leadership approach that embraces the future, evinces business-mindedness, and champions collaboration and transparency. An orientation to service, innovation, and demonstrated commitment to access, equity, openness, diversity, and inclusion are essential.

A search committee has been formed and Isaacson, Miller, the national executive recruiting firm, has been retained to support the committee in its work. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications can be sent to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

## THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES

CRL's roots date to 1949, when ten major U.S. universities together established the Midwest Inter-Library Corporation (MILC). In subsequent decades CRL welcomed institutions outside the midwestern U.S., and today [more than 200 institutions](#) are part of the consortium. These are chiefly U.S. and Canadian universities and colleges, both public and private, with global members that include Göttingen State and University Library, Jadavpur University, Max Planck Institute for Human Development, and Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

In its early years, CRL functioned largely as an aggregator and holder of physical materials: member institutions transferred items that were infrequently used but considered worthy of preservation for access by the collective. The Center also came to acquire newspaper titles that were not held by members, a collection that remains one of CRL's most important assets. In time the collection expanded to include other serials; state government and legal documents; government documents from outside the U.S.; microform collections; materials whose cataloguing required critical language skills; and difficult-to-acquire materials, such as political ephemera from developing regions.

Today, CRL is an important research library and a member of the [Association of Research Libraries](#). The present-day [collection](#) includes more than 6 million physical items and 90 million pages of digital content; it is shaped by its member institutions and enables and supports research and member collaboration in the humanities, social sciences, and international area studies. Collecting foci include news; law and government; finance; the history of science, technology, and engineering; and the history and economics of agriculture, with materials from around the globe. CRL shares its resources digitally as well as through interlibrary loan.

Beyond resource sharing, CRL serves as a forum for guidance on, discussion about, and collaboration around collection development, digitization, research, and community outreach and engagement. Its work has been supported by the MacArthur Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, and other major granting entities.

CRL is an independent nonprofit; it is not affiliated with or subsumed within an institution of higher education. The organization has a staff of approximately 45 and an annual budget of \$8 million. Located in Chicago just blocks from Jackson Park, the CRL facility houses offices, research space, and the repository facility for CRL collections.

CRL is governed by its member organizations. Designated representatives of the member institutions sit on the CRL Council of Voting Members; the council meets annually to elect the [Board of Directors](#).

## CURRENT OUTLOOK

This is a consequential moment for CRL—a search for a new president amidst technological disruption, rising demand for new tools of research and analysis, proliferation of data, and changes in scholarly communication. CRL must help its members find solutions to the logistical, structural, technical, financial, and legal challenges – and opportunities -- related to these developments.

Where CRL can provide the most value is in offering services that cannot be supported at individual member institutions; in providing resources that cannot be independently developed, secured, or maintained; and in providing opportunities for members to pool knowledge, develop platforms, and explore viable solutions. In a time of constrained resources for members, this value proposition must be clear and compelling.

CRL is primed for this work. In recent years, the Center has made significant investments in its facilities, including improvements that ensure an adequate preservation environment for CRL collections. CRL has also rethought its organizational structure and staffing. Its breadth of activities is significant, and in 2021 and 2022 center leadership took the step of outsourcing accounting and human resources, to achieve efficiencies of scale and ensure adherence to best practices. CRL governance by-laws are also under review and revision, to clarify roles and responsibilities, decision-making paths, and processes. Now, with these critical steps completed or well under way, the organization has the opportunity to focus on programs and services to create the most value possible for its members.

## **ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT**

CRL's purpose is to promote and leverage collective action among research libraries; it is a cooperative and exists for its members. To serve that goal, the President provides strategic leadership, tactical oversight, and operational management. The President must engage CRL's members and Board of Directors to apprehend common needs and requirements; identify, propose, and implement actionable solutions; and broadcast the value and impact of CRL. In this work the President must be mindful of the individual mandates and environments of the member institutions; evince partnership and champion collaboration; and execute and implement CRL's strategy with minimal guidance and maximal fidelity to the organization's cooperative mission.

Reporting to the President are the:

- Senior Director, Finance and Administration
- Director, Board and Member Relations
- Director, Global Collections
- Director, Discovery and Technology
- Director, NERL and CRL Licensing.

## **KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The President will:

***Articulate and advance CRL's strategic value to the field.***

The President will provide visionary leadership at scale. In the face of many potential directions, developing a focused and actionable strategy will be of paramount importance.

The President must lead the development of a compelling strategy for maintaining and preserving a

collection that is primarily composed of tangible/print materials while ideating and generating community support for an approach to digital collections that prioritizes collections growth, ensures relevance and sustainability, and serves the research needs of members. Such a strategy will emphasize access and discoverability across the CRL collections.

The President will also attend closely to scholarly research trends and federal regulations around data and data management, and help prepare CRL and its members to meet current and future requirements and needs. And, the President will position CRL as a trusted platform for solutions and shared learnings with respect to digitization, Open initiatives, and other developments in scholarly communication.

***Engage, collaborate, and communicate.***

The President will engage proactively and deeply, listen actively, and communicate openly and transparently. The President will seek and evince a thorough understanding of member institutions' challenges and issues and be responsive to and cognizant of their individual and common concerns. Areas of investment, strategies and priorities for growing the collections, and the continuation of services (and/or development of new ones) should be topics of regular and sustained conversation with members.

The President will be an effective broadcaster and partner who creates opportunities and structures for greater coordination between CRL and its members, and among member institutions. This will include the building of an organized structure for improved member outreach and engagement, providing increased entry points and education for full engagement with CRL resources and driving membership growth. Increased assessment capability must be realized that allows CRL to articulate a strong value proposition for the full range of member institutions. With other values-aligned library and research organizations within the U.S. and globally, the President will continue to elevate CRL's reputation and develop partnerships that drive impact for the field.

***Attend to financial and operational stability, excellence, and sustainability.***

As a membership organization, CRL is responsible and accountable to its constituents, and must use financial resources wisely and transparently. The Center operates from a position of fundamental strength: it has a deep reserve of goodwill and legacy as an effective partner, and member institutions are naturally inclined to renew and support the organization. At the same time, research libraries are called upon to provide new forms of value to their constituencies while facing continued financial pressures. With membership dues accounting for 96% of the organization's budget, CRL must demonstrate long-term value and accountability while diversifying its funding sources. The President will communicate openly about resource allocations and expenses, promoting trust and confidence.

***Ensure organizational health.***

CRL is dedicated to advancing the values and first principles of academic librarianship, including the defense of intellectual freedom, celebration of diversity, advocacy of responsible stewardship, and promotion of social responsibility and the social good. As a place of work, CRL places a high value on

excellence, initiative, innovation, inclusivity, and teamwork. However, given the broad range of activities and the geographic dispersal of its staff, there are opportunities to enhance cohesion and communication.

The President will exert a unifying influence to moderate these tendencies, and will cultivate a sense of teamwork, mutual support, and common purpose. The President will provide mentorship, ensure individual and collective excellence, and support CRL staff members in their specific roles, as members of a cohesive team, and as valued contributors within the CRL community.

The President will also embrace the role that CRL plays in democratizing and enriching the research library ecosystem, and strengthen diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to elevate to the organization's work, culture, and climate.

## QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring a commitment to the mission of research libraries, strategic understanding of the landscape and the forces effecting change across the library sector, library operational requirements, and an open, collaborative, service-minded approach.

In addition, this individual will possess many of the following qualifications, characteristics, and experiences:

**Professional qualifications:** Appreciation and insight about the evolving nature of library collections and services, and ability to apply that knowledge to research collection strategy and activation, organizational strategy and business model evolution, and operations that provide value to members and sustain CRL over time.

**Leadership experience:** A history of broad organizational leadership. Experience leading the development and successful implementation of strategic plans, product strategy, and/or business models. Ability to identify and execute initiatives that increase impact and value. Financial acumen, with a proven track record of effective budgeting and resource allocation, as well as the ability to identify opportunities to strengthen operations and diversify revenue.

**Management skills:** Outstanding communication, relationship development, and interpersonal skills that enable productive collaborations and creative solutions. Exceptional organizational abilities. Demonstrated abilities in member and stakeholder engagement. A record of success in financial management, change management, and talent development and management.

**Leadership skills:** Commitment to operational excellence. Transparency, clarity of communication. A record of success working through influence, bringing together constituents and members in a common vision. Experience in or demonstrated aptitude for volunteer and board cultivation and management, mentorship of staff, and professional development. Demonstrated effectiveness forming, leading, and supporting high-performing and diverse teams. Ability to work collaboratively and with initiative.

**Personal qualities:** An accessible leadership style characterized by integrity, high emotional intelligence, intellectual curiosity, openness, resilience and persistence, and creativity. Clarity of thought, sense of agency and urgency, orientation to and enthusiasm for the future. Commitment to collaboration, accountability, and fairness.

## TO APPLY

Confidential inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications should be submitted electronically to:

Anita Tien, Partner and Andy Marshall, Managing Associate  
Isaacson, Miller

[Presidential Search, Center for Research Libraries](#)

CRL is committed to actively promoting the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion as key components for serving our members and advancing our global mission. As such, CRL is an Equal Opportunity Employer and complies with all applicable federal, state and local laws regarding recruitment, hiring and employment and is dedicated to providing employees with a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. All employment decisions at CRL are based on organization needs, job requirements and individual qualifications, without regard to race, color, religion or belief, national, social or ethnic origin, sex (including pregnancy), age, physical, mental or sensory disability, HIV Status, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital, civil union or domestic partnership status, past or present military service, family medical history or genetic information, family or parental status, or any other status protected by the laws or regulations in the locations where we operate. CRL will not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on any of these characteristics.