Chapter XIII

Library Statistics and Outcomes Assessment

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The objective of collecting library statistics is “to assess the quality and effectiveness of services [and resources] provided by the library” (Poll, 2001, p.307). A review of the literature shows that measurement of electronic resources is a concern, that standards are necessary, and collaboration with publishers is required. As libraries spend more of their valuable resources to provide access to the electronic environment, they need to turn their attention to the effective measurement of electronic resources. In order to do this, libraries must determine relevant statistics (including those that can be collected internally by the library), request vendors to provide standardized statistics, and finally, evaluate the data in the context of their unique setting to enable sound decision-making. Libraries also need to utilize user surveys in addition to local and content-provider statistics, to get a clearer picture of their user’s needs and satisfaction with library services and resources. Although the task is daunting, obtaining reliable statistics in the electronic environment is needed and continues to be another challenging area in academic libraries.

This chapter will examine the various issues involved in gathering usage statistics for library electronic resources, including questions relating to why...
libraries collect statistics, what needs to be collected, and how data are
collected. The chapter will also address the challenges encountered in
collecting data, the perspective of content-providers, and the issues involved
in data presentation. Finally, there will be a short review of several key
initiatives on statistics for electronic collections.

OVERVIEW OF STATISTICS

Definitions
There is an immense need in the area of electronic resource measurement for
procedures or techniques that can be used to make sense out of numbers.” A simple
example is calculating the mean number of patrons attending classes on an electronic
resource. Hafner (1998, p.4) then defines measurement as “the process that
translates observations into data.” A counter on a Website is a form of measure-
ment. Statistics, therefore, is taking the data from the measurement process and
applying a technique or procedure to give meaning to that data. In addition, the
terms vendors, publishers, aggregators, and content providers refer to any supplier
of electronic resources.

Why Statistics Are Collected
Libraries collect statistics for a variety of reasons. Statistics show how
circulation trends have changed from year to year, explain how budget monies have
been allotted, determine the most used resources, demonstrate need (including
funding, programs, resources, new building, and equipment), and assess per capita
spending. In addition, in times of budgetary shortfalls or windfalls, knowing what
resources are of highest importance to primary constituents from a statistical
perspective (not just from observation) assists in making difficult decisions and in
communicating and defending those choices. Though electronic resources are a
relatively new library category, usage data is critical. Without “measures for
electronic services, libraries will be unable to compare traditional and electronic
services for decision-making purposes” (Bertot & McClure, 1998).

Areas in which libraries collect statistics include: budget allocations; collection
development; improvement of library services; marketing, promotion, and educa-
tion; determining cost apportionments for multi-campus libraries and/or consortia
purchases; reporting to accrediting boards and other agencies; assessing technol-
ogy; and strategic planning.
RFID Utilization in Public University Libraries in Jordan
www.igi-global.com/article/rfid-utilization-in-public-university-libraries-in-jordan/141373?camid=4v1a