ASERL Collection Assessment Survey Report
Conducted by ASERL Collection Assessment Committee
Summer 2019

Starting in January 2019, ASERL transformed the Collection Development Committee into the Collection Assessment Committee. To get a feel for how ASERL libraries are currently assessing their collection, both electronic and print, the Co-Chairs initiated a survey. The goal of the survey was to explore pain points in libraries are experience while assessing their collections as well as identifying innovative work libraries are doing in assessment that could be shared with all the libraries in the organization.

General Information Related to E-Resource Assessment
In the end, 22 of ASERL's 38 libraries responded to the survey, a 58% response rate. Each respondent answered all eight pertinent questions. Some general themes emerged:
   ● Nearly ¾ of the responding libraries have two or more staff persons responsible for collecting usage statistics. At five responding libraries there are five or more persons with these responsibilities.
   ● Similarly, approximately ¾ of responding libraries are using manual tools for some or all of their statistics gathering, which may explain the high levels of staffing assigned to this task.
   ● There were no significant commonalities among software or other tools that are being used for statistics gathering. One library (East Carolina University) reported using three separate tools plus some manual processes.
   ● Only one library (University of Georgia) reported being "completely satisfied" with the tool they use for statistics gathering (UGA uses Ebsco Usage Consolidation and some manual gathering).
   ● Most libraries reported some level of dissatisfaction with their current process, and several are looking for better solutions.

Use of E-Resources Collection Data for Decision Making
Most usage data is collected to determine which resources are worth renewing, and -- if needed due to budget constraints -- which items to cancel. Libraries are considering Cost Per Use most often, and try to take a long term view (examining at least 3 years of usage.) All respondents also consider liaison/selector feedback, and most indicated accreditation reports, faculty feedback, and departmental needs when determining renewals and cancellations.
   ● The University of Tennessee is using PowerBI to create interactive data visualizations, as well as more traditional analysis in Excel. Data visualization using tools provided by COUNTER can be difficult, so learning about UT's approach would be useful.
   ● A few libraries are conducting citation analysis as well -- how often the university's faculty publish in a specified journal, and how often a journal is cited in articles published by the local faculty. A presentation on this analysis might be useful to the group.
   ● A few libraries are also considering licensing concerns, technical support and system reliability, and UX/usability as part of their assessments.

- Georgie Donvan (College of William and Mary) is creating a presentation for ACRL on the changing accreditation requirements, noting "accreditation requirements never ask for specific journals any more."

Print Collection Analysis

Many libraries are having to make decisions about managing their print collections, including the use of circulation statistics to determine what to discard, what to move to an offsite or remote storage, and what to commit to a shared print retention program. Some libraries are using circ data to help make future purchasing decisions as well.

- Georgia Tech houses the vast majority of their print collection in an offsite storage, and uses circulation statistics to identify which titles to purchase electronically.
- Several libraries also said they make deselection decisions based on the ownership of an ebook. The University of Georgia "generates Alma analytics reports using past usage patterns to guide future selections," which is an interesting way to use your current print collection.
- East Carolina University tracks print and ebook usage and pairs them with price data to determine percentages for allocating the materials budget. The LC classes that are used more get more money in next year's budget.
- Florida State University is reviewing approval plans and EBA/DDA programs to determine best paths for monograph collections.
- Johns Hopkins University reports a unique project to document current assessment work flows to identify which library departments -- including Collection Services, Technical Services, and Academic Liaisons -- were involved in assessment activities. They felt the process was error-prone and time intensive. They used a Lean Six Sigma process to identify areas where to streamline the process and make better use of their ILS functions and data. As a result, JHU has created a Collection Management Council and implemented a new targeted review process by library floor, including shelf-capacity data, collection size, in-house usage, and overall collection usage data. This generates heat maps new visualizations to understand which floors are critical in terms of space or growth. The maps provide a new way to visualize data that was previously kept in text or spreadsheets.

Other Innovative Projects

In addition to Johns Hopkins, many of the libraries are doing unique projects at their library, that we would all benefit from learning about:

- Diversity in collections (William and Mary)
- Institutional Research Output/ Citation Review (Georgia Tech, University of Kentucky)
- User satisfaction/ User Experience Activities and Surveys (Tulane, University of Virginia)
- Alternative textbook program assessment (East Carolina University)
- OpenAthens usage statistics (UNC Charlotte)

This survey will inform ASERL to share information among ASERL libraries. Other ideas or suggestions not listed here are always welcome!

The Future

ASERL libraries continue to develop new assessment activities. The future of reduced public funding for higher education and changes in the marketplace will mean other changes for library assessment strategies.

- Duke is one of several ASERL libraries working on a project related to [breaking up big deal packages](#).
- Several libraries are seeking to hire assessment librarians, some specifically tasked with collection assessment specifically, others on more generalized assessment roles.
- Respondents are also seeking greater data granularity and deeper analytics that go beyond the traditional Cost Per Use. While there are no obvious solutions for this question at this time, it is clearly emerging as a theme for the future.

Conclusion

Overall, the libraries that responded to this survey are facing similar challenges. Thankfully, there are new approaches being tested within ASERL's membership that can foster new best practices. The ASERL Collection Assessment Committee will use this information as a platform for promoting the work of individual libraries and helping each other assess our collections more deeply and effectively for the best outcomes at our institutions.