Academic Library as Place: Users and Uses

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8th Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services
Florence, Italy 19 August 2009
Academic Research Library Use Trends

• On-site use indicators are down (in North America)
  – Library collections
  – Library mediated services such as reference
• Remote use indicators are up
  – Information resource access & delivery
  – Service delivery
• Library entrance counts remain stable
5 Questions on Use of Academic Library Facilities

- Who is coming to the physical library?
- What are they doing there?
- How has use changed?
- What is important to users?
- What role do local conditions and academic programs play?
Potential Data Sources on Library as Place

• **Surveys and statistics**
  – Entrance/gate counts
  – General user surveys
  – **In-Library use survey**
  – Reference/instruction stats
  – Collections use stats
  – Photocopies/prints stats
  – Facility data (seats, carpet, noise levels, lighting)

• **Qualitative information**
  – Focus groups
  – Interviews
  – Usability/wayfinding
  – Observation
  – User centered design
  – Comments/complaints
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington USA

Research university
• 27,000 undergraduate students
• 12,000 graduate and professional students (80 doctoral programs)
• 4,000 research & teaching faculty
• Strong in science & health sciences
• Ranked 16th in Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU)

Large library system
• $40 million annual budget (2008)
• 15 libraries (as of 2008)
  • 3 large and 12 smaller libraries
• 4.3 million visits (2008)
University of Haifa  
Haifa, Israel

**Research university**
- 10,000 undergraduate students
- 6,500 graduate students (24 doctoral programs)
- 25% of students are native Arabic speakers
- 1,200 research & teaching faculty
- Strong in humanities & social sciences

**One central library**
- $4.7 million budget (2008)
- High quality user services are priority
- Large English language collection
- Participant in ARL ESP service in April 2008
## Library Assessment at Universities of Washington and Haifa

### Washington (1991-)
- Large scale user surveys every 3 years since 1992
- In-Library Use surveys every 3 years beginning 2002
- Focus groups/interviews
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability/wayfinding
- Usage statistics/data mining
- Balanced scorecard (2009-)

http://www.lib.washington.edu/assessment

### Haifa (2006-)
- LibQUAL+® (2009-)
- Focus groups/interviews
- In-Library Use survey (2008-)
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability/Wayfinding
- Usage statistics/data mining
- Reference feedback mini-survey
Reasons for Running In-Library Use Survey

- Direct information on activities in the library during a specific visit for all library users
- Relatively inexpensive to administer
- Correlate w/user demographics
- Corroborate other data
- Use trends over time/baseline information
- Importance and satisfaction with services
- New or improved services wanted by users
- Identify problems
- You talk! We listen! We act!
In-Library Use Survey

• One page survey handed out to users as they enter library during a specified two hour time block. Users complete and return survey as they exit library.

• 2008 Survey questions
  – What did you do in this library today
  – How often do you use this library
  – How important are these services to you
  – How would you rate the library on services/environment
  – Demographics (group, academic program)
  – Specific locations visited within the library (large libraries)
Survey Distribution

**Washington**
- 3 two-hour sampling slots during a 4 week period in May 2008 at all 15 libraries
- Additional 2 sampling sessions at 12 smaller libraries
- 57% response rate

**Haifa**
- 10 twohour sampling slots during a 2 week period in July 2008
- 62% response rate
- Survey form, results and charts available in Hebrew on Library Assessment site at:
  - [http://lib.haifa.ac.il/assessment/](http://lib.haifa.ac.il/assessment/)
## Number of Respondents and Group Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Washington (3 sessions in common)</th>
<th>Haifa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduates</td>
<td>2210</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty – Staff</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-affiliated</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not state/other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total # respondents</td>
<td>3196</td>
<td>622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Student Respondents by Academic Program Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th>Graduate students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington n=2210</td>
<td>Haifa n=418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts-Humanities</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science-Engineering</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary/other/none given</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Did You Do In the Library Today?

- Staff assistance
- Looked for material
- Photocopied
- Work alone
- Work in groups
- Use lib computer
- Use own computer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Washington</th>
<th>Haifa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked for material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopied</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work alone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use lib computer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use own computer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Washington
- Haifa
## Does Use Vary by Academic Program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Washington Undergraduates</th>
<th>Haifa Undergraduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for assistance</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for material</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use library computer</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work alone</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compare Groups Over Time
UW Look for Material 2002-08
Percentage of Each Group

Faculty
Grad
Undergrad
Drilling Down by Library: UW Chemistry Library
Undergraduate Users by Major (n=79)

- Chemistry: 28%
- Biology: 14%
- Biochemistry: 9%
- Engineering: 9%
- Microbiology: 5%
- Health Sciences: 5%
- Psychology: 4%
- Other: 5%
- None: 20%
Drilling Down by Discipline: UW Biology Undergrads

Libraries Used by Biology Undergrads (n=122)
- Main: 40%
- Undergrad: 33%
- Health Sci: 10%
- Other Sci: 9%
- Chem: 7%
- Other: 10%

What Biology Undergrads Did in the Library
- Use own computer: 10%
- Use lib computer: 63%
- Group work: 13%
- Work alone: 74%
- Lib Material: 10%
- Help: 4%
How Important Are The Following Services? Scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)

- Library computers: 4.50
- Staff assistance: 4.25
- On-site collections: 3.75
- Place to work alone: 4.00
- Place to work in groups: 3.50
- Computers with software: 4.75

Washington: Blue
Haifa: Red
Compare Groups: Importance of On-Site Services for Haifa Undergraduates and Grad Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Undergrads (418)</th>
<th>Grad students (139)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Computers</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistance</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onsite collections</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work individually</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The comparison is based on a survey conducted with 418 undergraduates and 139 graduate students.
Compare Libraries: Importance of On-Site Services for Grad Students in Two Large UW Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Health Sciences (n=169)</th>
<th>Suzzallo-Allen (n=189)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library Computers</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistance</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Site Collections</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work individually</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in groups</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Would You Rate This Library on the Following? Scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent)
Comments Provide Context

Washington

What is so great about Suzzallo is that it is so much quieter and less busy than Undergrad. I use the library mainly for studying and I almost always use online resources because I'm not sure where to find books here. I'm sure staff here would help me, but I often rather use a crappy article that "kinda works" from online than go to the hassle of finding a book in the library.

Psychology undergraduate

Haifa

• My experience in the library is usually very good. The staff are very professional and always willing to help. The collection is excellent and so is the ILL service

  English Language and Literature graduate

• Sometimes if I can’t find material on my subject I give up

  Arabic and French Literature undergraduate
## Comments by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment Type</th>
<th>Washington 50% of surveys with comments</th>
<th>Haifa 40% of surveys with comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities-related</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer-related</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of opening</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collections (print &amp; online)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation/shelving</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services (reference)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other equipment</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signage</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Respondents Told Us

Both Universities
- Library viewed positively
- Workplace environment is crucial; differential workspaces important
- Library computers are heavily used and important
- More electrical outlets needed
- Comments identified specific issues and concerns that are actionable

Haifa
- Confirmed the “library as place” for students to work, seek assistance, use on-site holdings

Washington
- Confirmed long-term decline in use of print collections and mediated services with libraries now used primarily as an undergraduate place
Selected UW Actions

✓ Continue replacement and upgrade of library computers
✓ Close and consolidate smaller libraries and service points (based on use of on-site collections and mediated services)
✓ Provide more services online
✓ Install better directional signage
✓ Send more items to storage

• Submit plans for library renovation and refurbishment in high use libraries, especially undergraduate and health sciences
Selected Haifa Actions

✓ Provide space for group work,
✓ Reduce noise levels from equipment, staff and other workers
✓ Add or relocate computers within the library to where they’re needed
✓ Upgrade library computers
✓ Use results to aid the ongoing library renovation and refurbishment
  • Improve signage for computers and electrical outlets
  • Improve assistance for users in the stacks through phones and student employees identified as library staff
Conclusions

• The In-Library Use survey can capture information about physical library use and provide actionable data at reasonable cost and effort.

• Local conditions and academic disciplines of affect what they do in the library.

• Use of multiple assessment methods provides best picture of library use, user needs, and importance of different library services and resources.