

Assessing the Impact of Exposing Hidden Collections

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RBMS 2009 Charlottesville

SPECIAL
Collections
IN ARL LIBRARIES

Results of the 1998 Survey

Sponsored by the

ARL Research

Collections Committee



BY JUDITH M. PANITCH

Research & Special Projects Librarian

The University of North Carolina

at Chapel Hill



Public Services
in
Special Collections

ARL SPEC Kit 296

November
2006

Whose Decline? *Which Academic Libraries are "Deserted" in Terms of Reference Transactions?*

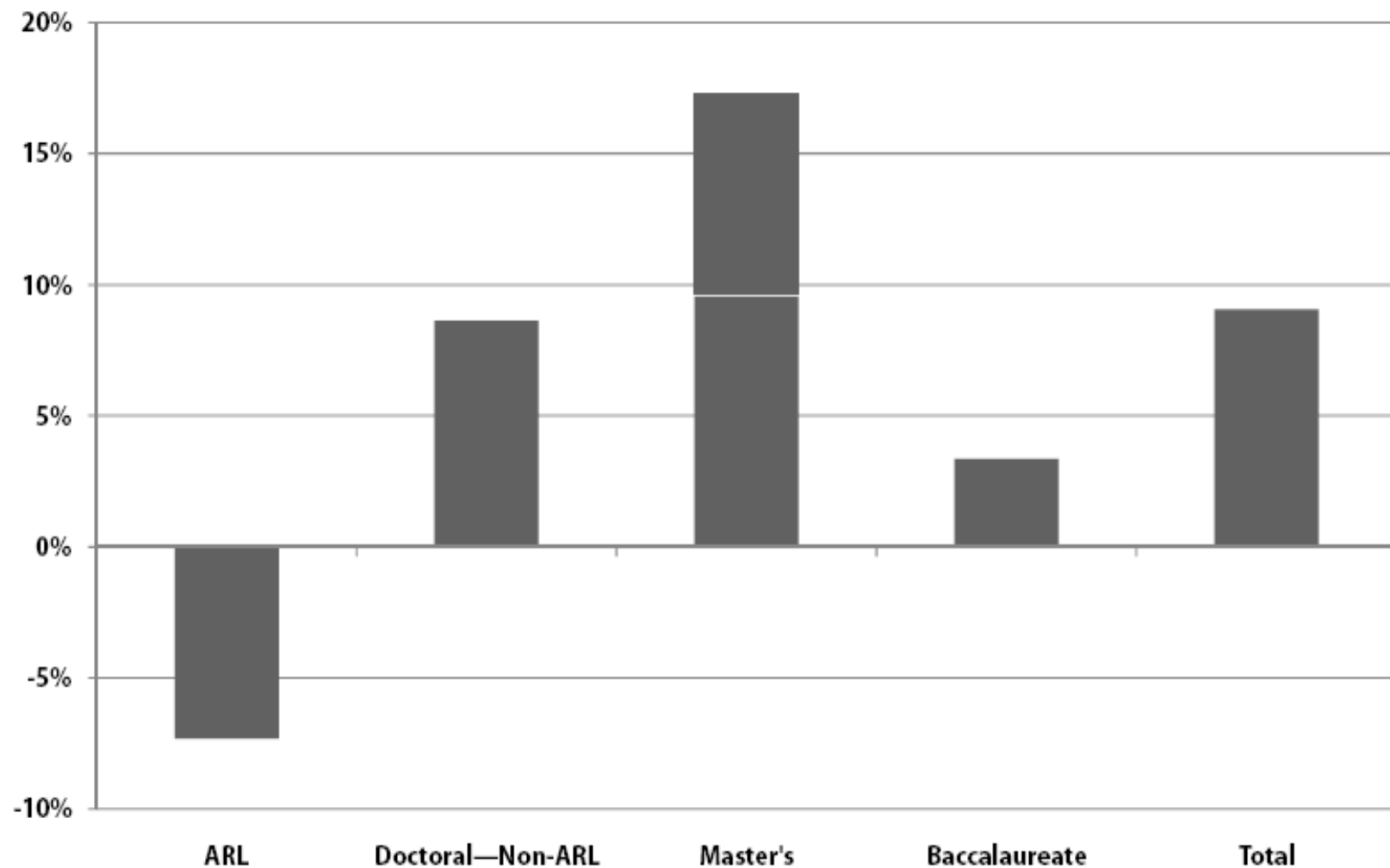
Rachel Applegate

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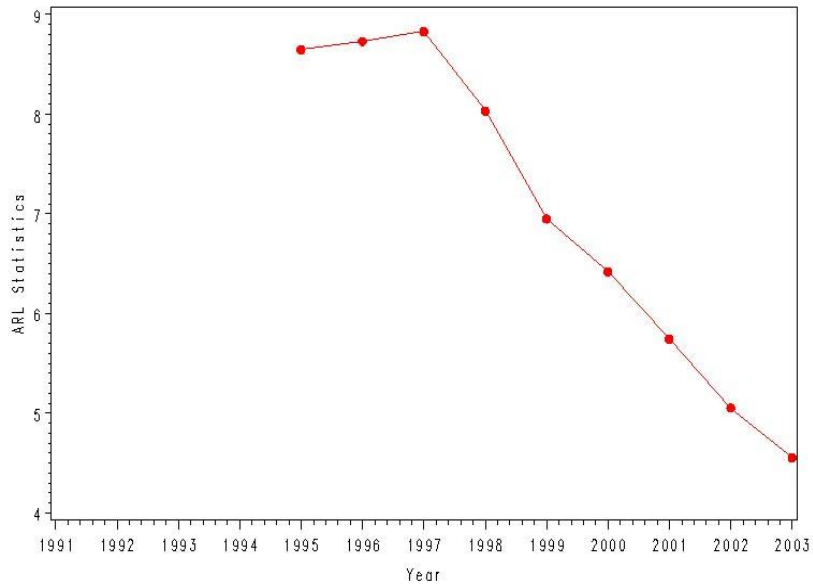
This study examines reference transaction quantities reported through the Academic Library Survey of the National Center for Educational Statistics to explore whether, and the extent to which, academic libraries are seeing a decline: the beginnings of a "deserted library." Data from 2002 and 2004 shows a decline in reference transactions per week on a per-library basis and on a per-student basis, but this decline differs by the type of institution (Carnegie Class). Librarians at master's institutions have actually seen an increase in the numbers of questions per librarian. ARL institutions' patterns differ from those of other universities, which calls into question using ARL experiences as indicative of the wider academic universe.

True, one organization, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), serves libraries at community, baccalaureate, master's, doctoral, and research institutions. However, some types of libraries are more often the site of published research than others. Association of Research Libraries (ARL) members are identifiable, organized, and have been committed for decades to extensive data-gathering. That makes their existence (for surveys) and their data a treasure trove for researchers interested in academic library issues. However, is the ARL perspective a reasonable representation of all academic librarianship? How representative is this group? Analysis of data about reference transactions from a much broader data pool suggests that ARL experiences may be disproportionately affecting the

Figure 5. Percent Change In Reference Transactions Per Week Per Librarian as Percent of 2002

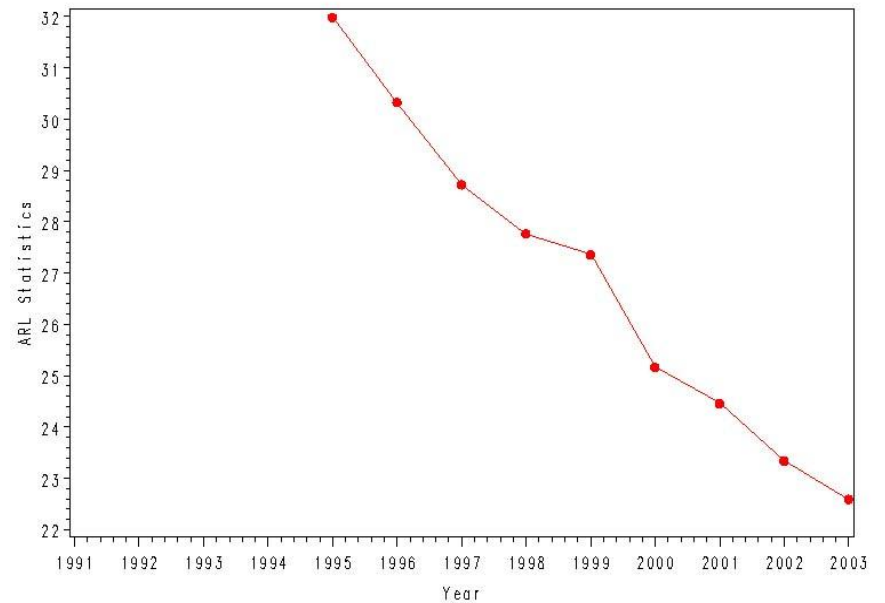


Reference Queries



ARL statistics

Total Circulation



Developing a Model for Reference Research Statistics

Applying the "Warner Model" of Reference Question Classification to Streamline Research Services

The merger of an academic library with the main branch of a large city's public library in 2003 required a new method for determining customer-patron transactions. The Warner model, previously reported in RUSQ in 2001, was adopted and used to investigate the possibilities for developing tiered reference, adjusting staffing levels, and improving service in a merged reference unit. The adopted model is recommended to other libraries that want to develop effective tools for analyzing reference services.

The new Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Library, which opened in August 2003, was a collaborative project of the City of San Jose and San Jose State University (SJSU). Two libraries, the University Library of SJSU and the MLK Library—the main branch of the San Jose Public Library (SJPL) system—

the library as place and consider the implications of how different work and service cultures are brought together in a new institution.²

There are merged and unmerged units in the new library. The four merged units in the new library are Access Services (including Circulation), Information Technology, Technical Services, and Reference. Data is gathered in the same way by all public service points, including those that remained unmerged: the public library's Youth Services, General Collections, and the California Room and the SJSU Special Collections unit.

A key element of the planning process dealt with the kind of statistics to be collected to evaluate the library. A comprehensive program of data collection commenced with the opening of the MLK Library in September 2003. The plan involved a number of library

Harry C. Meserve, Sandra E. Belanger, Joan Bowlby, and Lisa Rosenblum

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Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact

Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry

Abstract

This paper reports on an exploratory study that assessed the impact of four orientation sessions given by an archivist in the Yale University Library Manuscripts and Archives (MSSA).¹ The paper reviews the literature on the use of primary sources in the classroom, archival orientation sessions, and the impact of archival services. It outlines the methodology used in this study, discusses the findings, and concludes with suggestions for future research.

Introduction

Archivists gather data about the use of their holdings from interacting with users at the reference desk and in the reading room, answering reference letters, reading historical research, attending historical and/or genealogical conferences, and reviewing their archives registration data. The advent of digital archives and an increasing number of new users, however, erode the



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Research & PSQG

Survey of Visitors to UK Archives

Public Services Quality
Group

PSQG Steering Group

PSQG Quality Forum

Current PSQG activities

Access Standard for
Archives

**Survey of Visitors to UK
Archives**

**PSQG Survey of Visitors to
UK Archives 2007**

PSQG Survey of Visitors to UK
Archives 2006

PSQG Survey of Visitors to UK
Archives 2001-2004

Performance Measures and
Indicators

PSQG News

PSQG Survey of Visitors to UK Archives 2007

The most comprehensive survey of archive user satisfaction and demographics in the world, the PSQG Survey of Visitors to UK Archives has been taken every 18 months since 2001.

The 2007 survey is now available to view.

This file may take some time to download. Please be patient.

Download [here](#).



Press cutting about The Great Smog, 1952. Courtesy of the Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Science.



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Archival Metrics

Promoting a Culture of Assessment in Archives and Special Collections

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Archival Metrics: Purpose and Goals

Innovative archivists, manuscript curators, and records managers need to know:

- How effectively does this repository support our users' research needs?
- Are we learning as an organization by using data collected about the use of our collections to drive program improvement?
- Can we demonstrate our effectiveness in support of our unit's goals?

Our project seeks to promote a culture of assessment in the archival domain by creating standardized user-based evaluation tools and other performance measures. Our user-based evaluation

[toolkits](#)

are ready-made packages that include validated, tested questionnaires, administration and coding instructions, and sample reports illustrating how to effectively communicate study results to others. Adoption of these standardized measures will support the movement to allow repositories to compare their performance with others' thereby identifying best practices, and helping all institutions improve their user services.

Download toolkits

Toolkits are available for evaluating services for:

- [Researchers](#)
- [Online Finding Aids](#)
- [Websites](#)
- [Student Researchers](#)
- [Teaching Support](#)

Archivists' Views of User-based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers, and Requirements

Wendy M. Duff, Jean Dryden, Carrie Limkilde, Joan Cherry, and
Ellie Bogomazova

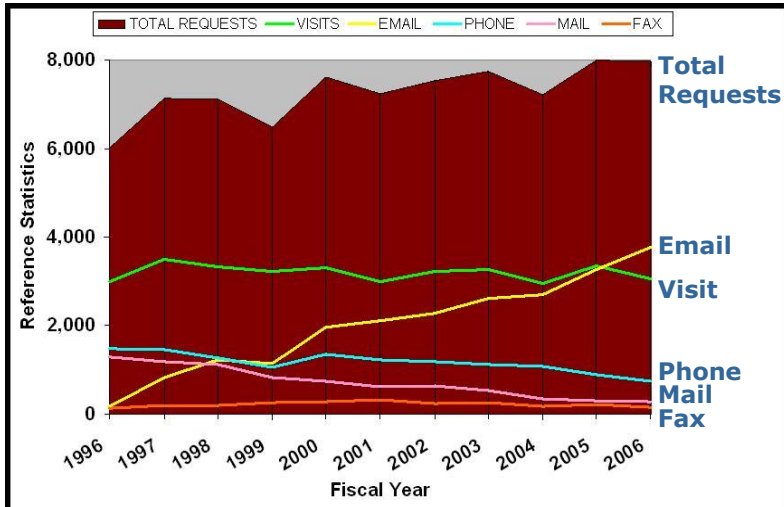
Abstract

This article reports on the second phase of a study concerned with developing standardized questionnaires for user-based evaluation for archives. Based on a review of current practices used by archivists to gather feedback and focus-group sessions held with archivists, this phase of the study concentrated on archivists' attitudes and concerns about user-based evaluations. It identified archivists' opinions about user-based evaluation of archives including the type of feedback they value, methods they currently employ to gather feedback from users, benefits and problems posed by conducting formal evaluation studies, and ways archivists would use standardized questionnaires for user-based evaluation if these tools were available. The paper also provides some recommendations to help archivists evaluate their services and systems.

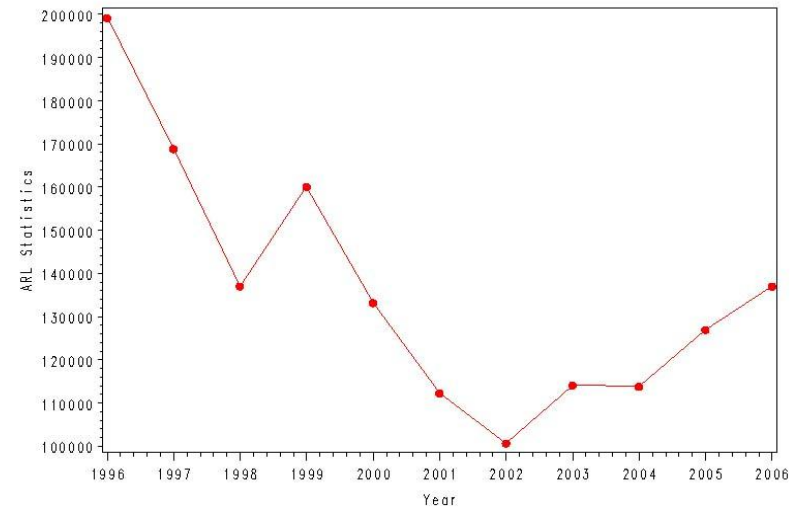
Introduction

Archival institutions require a greater knowledge of the needs of their users and potential users as well as a better understanding of how users interact with archival institutions' services and systems. This paper reports on research with archivists that sought to understand the kinds of feedback about archives that they would like to get from their users.¹ The research originally focused on digital archives,² however, the participants

REFERENCE QUESTIONS



Special collections at a private university



ARL statistics at that same private university

“What’s the Use?”

“What’s so special about special collections is the people who use them. Without the people who use these materials..., special collections are not special at all.”

Rachel Howarth, *RBM*
v.1, n.1 (2000): 42.

