

New national numbers on academic libraries

By Mary Jo Lynch

Academic libraries are busier than ever

Data on 54 variables describing all academic libraries in the U.S., reported to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in the fall of 1992, are now available on paper, on disk, and on Internet.

As a sample of what can be learned from these data, Table 1 compares 1990 and 1992 figures for three input variables and three output variables. Note that although total spending increased by 12% and number of volumes added increased by 10%, the number of staff decreased by 3%. Further analysis of Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data using other variables or data by state or by type of institution could explain these changes in more detail. Increases in the three output variables confirm the general belief that academic libraries are busier than ever. Again, further analysis of the IPEDS data could reveal patterns by state and/or by level of program.

Operating ratios added to report

For the first time this year the IPEDS *Academic Libraries* report presents a set of operating ratios. Some show library variables per FTE student; others show relationships between parts of the library budget or between library expenditures and total institutional expenditures. For each ratio, the report shows the first quartile, median, third quartile, and national average for each level of degree and for public and private control.

Table 2 displays national averages for two of the ratios. Column one shows that total library expenditures per FTE go up dramatically as the level of degree goes up, thus demonstrating the way library costs increase as the content of the academic program becomes more complex. In column two the average percent of collection expenditures spent on serials goes up dramatically as the level of degree increases, thus demonstrating the increasing reliance on information in expensive serials.

How data are reported

These data were collected from libraries on forms distributed by IPEDS, which relies on a network of state coordinators to distribute forms to campuses and ensure their return to NCES. These coordinators are usually in the state agency that coordinates higher education. In some states, the responsibility is shared by several agencies, each concerned with a different sector of higher education (i.e., different level of degree or type of control).

Table 1. Academic Libraries: 1990, 1992

Staff (FTE)		Circulation	
90 99,682		90 159,837,737	
92 96,241 (-3%)		92 180,392,780 (+13%)	
Operating expenditures		Loans to other libraries	
90 3,257,813,000		90 6,576,111	
92 3,648,653,735 (+12%)		92 7,987,047 (+21%)	
Volumes added		Loans from other libraries	
90 19,002,705		90 4,199,269	
92 20,982,250 (+10%)		92 5,304,680 (+26%)	

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Table 2. Expenditures, 1992: National Averages

Highest level of degree	Total operating expenditures per FTE student	Current serials as % of collection expenditures
	\$	%
Doctorate	902.90	55.7
Master's	659.36	43.0
Bachelor's	431.86	37.0
< 4 years	184.69	29.2

Typically, forms are sent from NCES to the state agency to the campus office responsible for institutional research. The route back to NCES reverses the distribution route (i.e., campus to state agency to NCES).

Since 1990 ALA, ACRL, and ARL have been working with NCES to establish and maintain a system whereby a "library representative" (LR) in each state has agreed to help NCES with the biennial data collection. At this writing only two states lack LRs. In 10 states the LR is available to assist the state IPEDS coordinator. In 38 other states and the District of Columbia the LR keys data from the forms submitted by libraries into the special software developed by NCES called IDEALS (Input and Data Editing for Academic Library Statistics). After running edit checks, the LR sends a diskette to NCES for creation of the national report. The LRs in several states also use the data locally for state-level reports (e.g., Michigan, Utah, Louisiana).

Obtaining the 1992 data

The 1992 report and data files are available from several sources:

- **Internet.** The report and the data files are available on the U.S. Department of Education/OERI gopher server: select Educational Research, Improvement, and Statistics (OERI & NCES)/; then select National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)/; followed by Library Statistics Program/; then select Surveys and Studies/; followed by Academic Library Statistics.

The data files and the report are each preceded by an accompanying descriptive readme file. Each readme file, the report, and the data files may be downloaded. The report and the data files have been com-

pressed on Internet using a software program called pkzip. This is available on the department's gopher server under the main menu.

- **Government Printing Office (GPO).** Copies of the report and the data files can be purchased from New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954. You may place credit card orders by fax at (202) 512-2250.

Call the GPO Order Desk at (202) 512-1800 for additional ordering information or to place your order by telephone.

- **National Data Resource Center (NDRC).** If you provide two DOS-formatted high-density 3.5" diskettes and a self-addressed diskette mailer, the NDRC will provide you the data file free of charge. Send your request by Internet to: ndrc@pcci.com; or send a fax to (703) 820-7465; or write to NDRC at 1900 Beauregard Street, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA 22311; or call (703) 845-3151. ■

Letter

Gover gets credit for coining phrase

To the Editor:

Thanks to everyone in ACRL who provided a summary report of their programs in Miami ("ACRL in Miami: Taking the Network Plunge," September 1994). We are also pleased to note that ACRL liked the title of our Extended Off-Campus Library Services Section (ECLSS) program enough to use it in the heading of the report. As chairperson of the ECLSS Program Committee for Miami, I was honored to be able to work with a number of individuals who helped make our program a huge success. I would like especially to recognize the person who created the name "Taking the Network Plunge": Harvey Gover, branch campus librarian at Washington State University and a member of the Planning Committee.—*Thomas E. Abbott, dean, Learning Resources and University Development, University of Maine at Augusta*