

The Collection Use Survey: The Purdue University Calumet Experience

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In 1977 it became apparent that collection management data were needed at Purdue University Calumet. The library had 1,224 current periodical subscriptions and its collection was approaching 150,000 physical volumes with an additional 300,000 microform units. The library's annual operating budget was approximately \$600,000.

The management data were needed as evidence to convince the campus' sixteen academic departments that periodicals were not being used and that funds would be better used if more books and fewer periodical subscriptions were purchased.

The first step was to measure the library use of bound and unbound periodicals that were purchased by the academic departments. It was decided to record the library use of each bound or unbound periodical gathered in daily pickups for a two-day period each fall and spring semester. During the nine two-day surveys taken between 1978 and 1982, 2,495 uses were logged. Although 404 different titles were used, only 260 were used more than once. The data clearly indicated that the periodicals being purchased by the departments did not receive high library use. The oft proclaimed comment, "I don't check them out but only use them in the library," just was not true.

Phase Two of the survey took place in the summer of 1981. The home use of bound periodicals was measured. Based on a population of 40,000, a random sample of 420 volumes representing 291 titles was taken. The results showed an average circulation per volume of 1.3. However, of the 74 titles in the sample, 63% of the titles were never checked out for home use. Clearly the data indicated that the bound journals were not receiving heavy home use.

The third step of the use survey was made during the summer of 1982. Based on a population of 79,000 monographs, 1,000 volumes were sampled. The average circulation since 1973 or the date of acquisition (if later) was 3.1. Of the books sampled, 198 or 29.8% never circulated. Thus the data showed that 70.2% of the volumes in the monograph collection circulated at least once. The evidence clearly contradicted the view of the faculty that periodicals are more important and should receive higher priority than books.

The idea of replicating the University of Pittsburgh use study on a smaller scale did not seem fea-

sible.¹ Rather than track acquisitions over a five-year period, as was done in the Pittsburgh study, a simple sampling technique was used. Each library shelf on the library map was given a sequential number. This was easy to do since with few exceptions the bound periodical area had six shelves per section and the monograph area had seven shelves per section. Thus, blocks of numbers could be assigned to each row of ranges on the map without physically numbering the shelves.

The last step of sampling procedure required going physically to the stacks. The volumes on the sample shelf were counted and sequentially numbered ping pong balls equaling the total number of volumes on a shelf were placed in a box. Counting from the left, the volume sampled corresponded to the number on the ball pulled from the box. The use data were recorded from the book card in the book pocket onto separate 4x6 index cards.

It is estimated that the three surveys consumed 300 hours of staff time. Most of the work was done by regular employees, thus no additional staff was required except for an additional \$300 in student wages. Considering that \$196,000 is the current annual expenditure for library materials, the surveys were a small investment in time and money to find out how the materials being purchased were actually used.

Since the methodologies of collecting the library use and home statistics were different, all the data do not coalesce. The results nonetheless gave the library hard collection use data, demonstrated that less should be spent on periodicals and more on books, and is now being used to guide the collection's growth.

Statistical summary sheets of the studies are available upon request. For further information, please write to Bernard H. Holicky, Library, Purdue University Calumet, Hammond, IN 46323; (219) 844-0520, ext. 249. ■■

¹Allen Kent, et al., *Use of Library Materials: The University of Pittsburgh Study* (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1979). See also Thomas J. Galvin & Allen Kent, "Use of a University Library Collection," *Library Journal* 107 (November 15, 1977):2317-20.

