Usage statistics as a practical tool in the library

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Usage statistics as a practical tool

• Using data
• Potential pitfalls
• Practical applications
Using data
What data is available?

- Vendors, gateways
  - COUNTER, ICOLC
  - Non-standard
- Authentication systems
  - Athens, EZproxy, RAPTOR
- Discovery systems
  - Metasearch, discovery system, link resolver
- Web analytics
So what can we find out?

what viewed?
which years?
which titles?
how much?
number downloads?
how many pages?
when viewed?
time per page?
how viewed?
on or off-campus?
where viewed?
which browser?
using a mobile?
Stop!

Lies, damned lies and statistics ...
What do you need to know?

Analysis should have a purpose
• Don’t think about what the data could tell you
• Focus on what you need to know

What are your goals?
• To offer good value for money?
• To provide useful information to users?
Can the data help you find out if you are achieving them?
What do you need to know?

What do you want to know?
- Decision making

What do you need to show?
- Accountability
- Benchmarking

Focus on
- Context & comparison
- Action
What data can we add?

Cost of resource
• Cost / number of items in package = cost per item
• Cost / number of uses = cost-per-use

Number of uses per subject group
• Which department is making most use of a resource?
• Can we ask them to pay for it?
Potential pitfalls
Potential Pitfalls

Too much data!
• Time-consuming to collect, collate and analyse
• Automated tools can help
• JUSP, SUSHI
• Swets Selection Support, 360 Counter

Not enough data
• Not all resources provide statistics
• Offline resources may not be counted
Potential Pitfalls

Comparing data
• Different standards
• Different delivery formats

Zero-use?
• Are subscribed titles with zero-use omitted?
• Are unsubscribed titles with zero-use included?
Potential Pitfalls

Combining data
- One resource on several websites
- Need to combine reports for complete data

Unpicking data
- More than one resource in a single report
  - current subscriptions + archive package + free titles
- For cost-per-use, need to unpick usage for each package
Practical applications
Measuring and benchmarking

Counting
- Number of titles
- Number of uses

Reporting
- SCONUL return
- Internal reports and publicity

Comparing
- Benchmarking against other libraries
Making renewal and cancellation decisions

Is a resource pulling its weight?
• Cost per use
• Number of uses per relevant staff / student

But what represents good value?
• Use does not necessarily indicate value
• High number of searches could mean its difficult to use
• Low use could still support key income-generating researchers

Data alone is not enough!
Choosing the best business model

You may be able to acquire content in different ways

• Package or individual titles?
• Subscription or purchase?
• Single-user or multi-user?

Which one represents the best value-for-money?
Packages vs individual titles

E-books

Comparing e-book packages vs individually selected titles
• Cost per title – package should be cheaper!
• Use per title – package may be lower?
• Cost per use – expect selected titles to be better value?
You might be surprised!
Packages vs individual titles

E-books

Remember that use does not always indicate value

- Package may represent publisher’s choice of titles
- May be better to select the books your academics recommend
- May be better to use patron-driven access?
Packages vs individual titles

E-journal big deals

Keep the big deal or go back to choosing individual titles?

Compare cost of subscribed vs unsubscribed titles
• Calculate total cost of subscribed titles
• Calculate additional cost of unsubscribed titles
• Separate usage of subscribed vs unsubscribed titles
• Calculate cost per use for each
✓ Low cost per use for unsubscribed titles = good value
Packages vs individual titles

E-journal big deals

Compare number of titles with zero-low usage

- Lots of unsubscribed titles with low use?
  May be better off dropping the big deal

- Lots of subscribed titles with low use?
  May be better off changing your subscribed titles
Subscription vs purchase

E-books & Journal backfiles

Look at level of use per year
- Ongoing use = purchase may be best
- Rapidly declining use = subscription may be best

Look at cost per use per year
- For subscriptions, look at annual cost-per-use – is it dropping?
- For purchases, look at lifetime cost-per-use – how fast is it dropping?
Single or multi-user

E-books
Databases with ‘per seat’ charging

Look at usage over the year
• Steady, low-level usage = single-use is sufficient
• Peaks of usage / turnaways = multi-user may be necessary
More potential applications

Promoting your resources
• Marketing underused resources

Rebalancing your collection
• Comparing use / costs of journals vs books
• Comparing use / costs between subject areas

Refocussing your resources
• Which search systems are used to find your resources?
• Are mobile phones used to access your resources?
In conclusion
Think!

Data can give you insights, but not necessarily answers

• Need to ask the right questions
• Need to interpret reports carefully
• Need to get qualitative feedback from your users
And finally ...

"88.2% of statistics are made up on the spot"

(Vic Reeves)
Thank you

Any questions?