

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



Counting the cost:

The role usage statistics can play in a library
subscription review



UKSG Usage Statistics for Decision Making



- Background
- Timescale for the review
- Compiling the usage data
- Consultation with academic departments
- Responding to feedback
- Outcomes
- What's next



- Top 10 in UK for both teaching and research
- 81 in World University rankings
- Equal emphasis given to Arts & Humanities, Science & Medicine and the Social Sciences
 - 25 departments plus numerous centres, no faculty structure
- Very high expectations of Library collections: 'broad and deep'
- Relatively small, c. 12,000 FTE



- Budgets tight
 - 2009/10 one-off resources budget £350K
 - 2009/10 subscriptions budget £1,785K
 - Subscription budget especially is under pressure due to high inflation and currency exchange rates in recent years
 - Most of our one-off purchases budget is spent buying books on reading lists, both print and electronic
- External and local pressures
 - Global financial situation
 - UK HE funding cuts
 - New departments of Law and Theatre, Film & Television coming into regular budget for the first time in 2010/11 (capital funding come to an end)
 - Continual demand for more journals and more books



- Take most, but not all of the NESLi2 deals: have Elsevier, Wiley Blackwell, Springer, Sage and some smaller publishers (plus T&F which is not NESLi2)
 - Also significant capital investment in journal backfiles in last 2 years
- E-only for some publishers but not all
- 9,233 current journal titles in total (including titles in package deals)
 - 6,650 e-only
 - 1,777 print and electronic
 - 806 print only
- Also subscribe to databases and some e-book collections
- Cover Arts & Humanities, Science & Medicine and Social Sciences subjects
- All subscriptions topsliced in 2008/9; departments no longer have their own journals budget

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Obtained usage data for calendar years 2008 and 2009

- COUNTER usage data downloaded from publisher and vendor sites
 - Counter JR1 report (Number of Successful Full-Text Article Requests by Month and Journal)
 - Counter JR1a (Number of Successful Full-Text Article Requests from an Archive by Month and Journal) or JR5 (Number of Successful Full-Text Article Requests by Year and Journal) report where applicable
- Checked individual JR1 reports where necessary (e.g. Sage/HighWire) to identify and delete the same usage reported under different accounts
- Uploaded each JR1 report to UStat (statistics storage and analysis tool)
 - UStat now set up to for SUSHI

- **Prepared the usage data**
 - Consolidated the individual JR1a and JR5 reports into a single spreadsheet
 - From UStat output individual platform reports (JR1) for relevant platforms
 - Consolidated the platform reports into a single spreadsheet and added in other usage as necessary
 - Normalised and de-duplicated the data in both spreadsheets
- **Subtracted archive usage from current subscription usage**
 - Used Access to query the consolidated archive usage spreadsheet against the consolidated current subscription usage spreadsheet (match on Print ISSN)
 - Exported the query results and subtracted archive from current usage to leave a spreadsheet of current usage per title (Final Usage)
 - Ran an unmatched query to identify unmatched archive usage, checked titles against the Final Usage spreadsheet and subtracted archive usage
 - Checked and accounted for anomalies and errors



- **Matched Usage against subscriptions**
 - Using Access queried Final Usage against a spreadsheet of current subscriptions (matched successively on ISSN, EISSN, and title) and exported the results
 - Ran unmatched queries (successively on ISSN, EISSN, and title) and manually copied unmatched data into the final subscriptions spreadsheet. Checked for anomalies and errors
 - Compiled usage for packages using data from UStat, and subtracted archive usage
 - Calculated the cost per article access for each title and package. Manually consolidated usage for bundles of titles to give a single cost per use figure

- Would a product like 360 Counter save us a significant amount of tedious work?



- For each publisher, aggregator and/or platform downloaded:
 - Counter DB1 report (Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Database) and/or Counter BR6 report (Total Searches and Sessions by Month and Service)
 - Counter JR1 report (Number of Successful Full-Text Article Requests by Month and Journal) and/or Counter BR2 report (Number of Successful Section Requests by Month and Title)
 - Other usage reports which indicate sessions, searches and content usage (where applicable) if Counter reports are not available.

- Manually copied relevant usage data to a spreadsheet of database and ebook package subscriptions and calculated cost per session, search and content accessed



- Usage is only recorded for electronic access. Where subscriptions include a print element this usage cannot be accounted for
- It is difficult to assess the accuracy of usage data:
 - Publishers reload and adjust data after errors are detected but this often does not happen until several months later
 - The compilation of the usage reports may not be accurate, the same reports downloaded at different times sometimes report different usage
 - It is difficult to account for title changes
 - Problems with the activation and renewal of subscriptions and unexpected loss of access will affect reported usage
- No comparative analysis or internal benchmarking has been done previously. Regular analysis should help pinpoint possible anomalies and errors in the data
- If a publisher does not provide separate data for backfile usage then this cannot be taken into account
- The time period used for calculating cost per use may have an effect on the figure produced e.g. academic year, subscription year, calendar year
- There is no recognised standard for calculating the value of databases and database usage figures are often not Counter compliant

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- A consultation spreadsheet was produced, with separate sheets for:
 - E-journals not in packages, with cost, article downloads and cost per request
 - E-journals not in packages but no usage data, only costs
 - Print only journals and costs
 - Springer NESLi2 package titles, with list prices, article downloads and list cost per request, whether subscribed or non-subscribed
 - Sage NESLi2 package titles, with list prices, article downloads and list cost per request, whether subscribed or non-subscribed
 - Database titles, with costs and numbers of sessions/searches
 - Print standing orders and costs
 - New subscription requests received to date, with costs
 - Packages and databases in multiyear deals which are not being considered this time because they cannot be cancelled in 2011
- Spreadsheet circulated to Academic Liaison Librarians for comment
- 3,519 titles included in the review



- Your feedback: initial feedback by 14 June is to give you the opportunity to identify obvious things to feed into the information going to Library Committee. You will be able to input further after that in discussion with departments
- Individual title feedback: in the spreadsheet there is a column in all the relevant sheets for your comments on each individual title if you wish. Please add any thoughts you have about why a specific title should be saved or cancelled. Good academic reasons needed!
- Data: the data is not 100% complete or accurate as this is impossible – it's just not available. We have done the best we can, but please be tolerant and don't get too bogged down. It's just a starting point.
- Criteria: there are innumerable potential criteria we could use to identify titles for subscription or cancellation. However, the more complicated it gets, the more it's open to debate on relative importance of different criteria, whether they are valid or not, etc., etc., and the more difficult it gets to explain to people. It is also debatable how much value complicated criteria add, as none of them will be absolutely agreed and accurate. Simple is perhaps best, with a combination of usage data (where it exists) plus ALL and department knowledge of individual titles' value
- General comments: please add any comments on criteria, data, process, issues, consequences, risks, etc.: to the comments document
- Interlibrary Loans (ILLS): one major unknown quantity is how many failed requests convert to an ILL request; we've used two ratios as an indicator (1:10 and 1:100), but really we have no idea what the conversion rate would be. We've also costed ILLs at £9 (full rate paid by library but with no limits) and £7 (£2 contribution from users; but doesn't take account of any limits). This is just to simplify things; we haven't come to any conclusion yet about charging for, or limits on, ILL requests. Another issue is that we could be moving from knowing what we're spending (subscriptions) to not knowing what we might need to spend (ILLS).

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- Spreadsheet sent out with accompanying report
 - Titles coded red (to cancel; strong academic case needed for retention), amber (at risk; ALL suggestions for retention, strong academic case requested to support) and green (to retain; titles with 200 or more article requests)
 - Academics asked to rank titles in their subject areas on a scale of A-D, with A being essential, B important, C desirable and D no longer needed
- Impressive level of engagement given the short timescale
- Potential list of cancellations totalling almost £150K produced as a result of feedback received, and titles re-coded
 - £65K no feedback or rated C or D (coded red)
 - £41K rated B (coded amber)
 - £43K rated A but with a cost per use > £4.50 and number of article requests < 200 (coded green)
- Titles rated A but with a low cost per use and high number of article requests were safe from this point on and taken out of consideration – for this year at least

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Library Committee meeting

- Meeting on 27 July between Library and academic staff – almost every department represented
- Lively discussion!

It is outrageous to be making cuts within the timescale of the review. Another year is required to consider the implication of the cuts and their relative impact against savings in other areas at Library and University level.

Is it possible to view these cuts in relation to other Library services e.g. funding for additional opening hours? What is the relative impact of making savings in other areas against losing access to essential journal titles?

The usage data for e-journals clearly shows that the collection is well used and that heavily used titles would be lost if the full £150k saving is made from subscriptions within this timescale.



Further comments from academics

At University level, £150k represents only c. three members of academic staff. After strategic discussion it may be that freezing recruitment of such posts would be less damaging than cutting core journal subscriptions.

The Library's collections have much improved over the last 5 years so the move to cut such a large number of core subscriptions is counterproductive and undercuts the improvements, especially if e-journals are cancelled.

The review demonstrates that we have a very well managed journals collection and that cuts mean going to the bone.

The proposed cuts may put newly developing areas under threat if important or key titles are cancelled and if new titles can't be purchased. This is particularly worrying for interdisciplinary research centres, new departments and the new strategic research themes currently being developed.



Further comments from academics

Have the implications of the cuts been fully evaluated? The cuts could actually lose the University revenue in other areas e.g. not recruiting post-graduates (est. £150k = 15 international taught post-graduates) or researchers, or by the impact on research activity. Therefore a strategic view needs to be taken of the possible impact of the proposed cuts.

The review process needs proper consideration at a higher level, taking a strategic view, and including the input of Research Committee.

A strategic view is required as recruiting new staff and developing new interdisciplinary research themes through the University Large Grants Initiative will bring additional requirements for new subscriptions.

The University needs to clarify what the role of the Library is and fund it accordingly.

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- Library Director agreed to reduce the minimum savings target to £100K from £150K for 2010, but a further review will have to be undertaken next year to make the extra savings
- This means nearly all of the green titles are saved for another year
 - We do put on hold 38 Green titles with Cost per use >£20 and number of Article requests <50 (The subscription cost of these is £14,256)
- Academics given a last chance deadline of 13 September to save red and amber titles
- We decide to cancel a couple of A&I databases and move some others to cheaper platforms
- Reinforced the message that no new subscriptions can be taken until strategic discussions with the University have taken place
 - Meeting arranged with the Library and the PVC for Research on 21 October
 - Departments urged to specify their requirements for new subscriptions during their Medium Term Planning (budget) meetings with the University (which outline plans for new courses etc), and when costing research bids

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- Final decisions made in mid-September
- Cancellations/savings: £101,562
 - 293 titles cancelled
- Staff time involved hard to gauge, but significant
 - Project team most involved, especially the Electronic Resources Co-ordinator
 - Academic Liaison Librarians
 - Academic staff
 - Plus resulting work for Serials and Acquisitions staff in actioning the cancellations and renewals
- So what next?



It all starts again in 2011!

- Internal Library discussions about to begin re: another review during 2011 for the 2012 subscription year
- Can we improve on the methodology used to collate and analyse the usage data?
 - How would an external tool help us?
 - More widespread adoption of SUSHI will help
 - Can we develop an online way of collecting feedback from academics?
- Probably won't use calendar year usage data this time, because it delays the start of detailed work until February, and consequently there is less time later in the year for consultation with academics
 - August-July data likely to be used instead, as this will already have been downloaded for the purpose of compiling the annual Sconul statistical return
- Financial situation highly unlikely to improve in the short-medium term
- We therefore expect to have to reduce our subscriptions portfolio significantly, unless we can get
 - Better deals/pricing
 - More money from the University
 - Both seem highly unlikely, particularly the latter!



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