

# **SPEC Kit 352**

Collection Assessment

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# Survey Results

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The purpose of this survey was to determine how collection assessment methods, measures, and practices are currently employed and how the results are used at ARL member libraries. Despite recent prognostications of radical changes in form and function of libraries (Taiga Forum, 2014), the center of any current library (physical, virtual, or hybrid) is its collection. There have been notable changes in collection development, management, format, distribution, organization, and accessibility of these collections, but the collection remains at the center of librarianship (Bullis & Smith, 2011; Lehman, 2014). Indeed, because of these changes and the corresponding predictions of radical transformation of library collections (e.g., reduced physical collections, on-demand purchasing, just-in-time collection building, etc.), collection evaluation, analysis, and assessment will be needed to manage these activities that are much more complex than traditional selection.

Librarians have always cared about the quality of their collections (Johnson, 2009; Mosher, 1984), but formal methods of evaluation or assessment have developed primarily from the middle of the last century. Most complex and discussed among these has been the Conspectus method, but other methods developed include White's Brief Tests (White, 2008), circulation and usage analysis (Adams & Noel, 2008; Hughes, 2012), and citation analysis (Hoffmann & Doucette, July 2012; Kohn & Gordon, 2014; Wical & Vandenbark, 2015). While there have been many articles describing these methods and case studies of assessments of specific collections, there have been few surveys of assessment or evaluation practices actually used in libraries.

This survey was developed to better understand and to clarify the processes, procedures, and approaches used by research libraries related to collections data collection, analysis, and reporting. The survey was distributed to the 124 ARL member libraries in May 2016. Seventy-one responses were received by the June deadline, providing a 57% response rate. Although all 71 respondents indicated that data collection and analysis are integral to collection management, the practices they use vary widely.

The assessment of collections involves both the collecting of data and the analysis of that data. Because the processes for these activities may be distinct or converged, depending on the institution, survey questions addressed each activity separately. Attention was paid to the positions of individuals involved in collection evaluation, analysis, assessment, and data gathering because these processes involve numerous individuals.

## Collection Assessment Process

All but two of the responding institutions indicated that they gather collections-related data above and beyond what is required by the annual ARL, ACRL, and IPEDs statistics surveys, with over half doing so on a regular basis, and nearly 40% on a project basis. The most common types of other data gathered include usage and cost data for evaluating resources, and holdings, usage, and expenditures related to subject-based collections. Other categories of data reported include Web analytics (e.g., Google Analytics, EZproxy logs, search logs), analysis of interlibrary loan (ILL) requests to assess needs or gaps, usage patterns (e-resources, circulation, digital repository usage), and citation analyses.

Assessment of library collections (versus the gathering and reporting of data) is also an integral aspect of collection management. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents currently have a process (formal or informal) for regularly assessing library collections, and another 30% are in the process of developing one. Only three institutions reported no process for regular assessment or any intent to implement one, primarily due to insufficient staff, or to lack of time, technical infrastructure, or perceived value. Collection assessments and evaluations are conducted by most respondents annually and/or as needed. A few respondents evaluate “continuously,” semi-annually, quarterly, or monthly. About half of the respondents indicated no limit to the scope of their evaluations, another 20% limit the scope by format and subject, and 13% limit their scope to selected formats. The respondents’ comments regarding the scope of collection evaluations indicate that the evaluations are conducted at varying levels and only for subscribed resources.

Responses concerning the formats and collections included in evaluations indicated that this question was not clearly stated. Based on the comments, it is clear that the verbiage used for format and collection were neither well defined nor differentiated. For the purposes of this analysis, therefore, the responses to the questions concerning *format* and *collection* were merged. It was clear that all respondents have included online resources and all but two have included print materials in their evaluations. Additionally, close to two-thirds have included audiovisual materials or resources, and about half included microform and other physical materials such as government documents, music scores, and open access resources.

Serials and/or monographs—regardless of format—were evaluated by nearly all respondents, followed by demand-driven acquisitions (DDA). Nearly half the respondents have evaluated their government documents collections, while a third have evaluated their open access resources or their archives. Interestingly, eleven respondents (16%) selected all of the options, indicating comprehensive assessment. Conversely, six respondents had only evaluated journals and monographs, and four respondents selected only one collection.

## Locus of Data Collection and Analysis

*At what levels do libraries collect and analyze the data?*

An important goal in conducting this survey was to understand the extent of human resources devoted to collection assessment. Of the 67 respondents who answered the admittedly complex series of questions regarding locus of data collection and analysis responsibilities, most indicated that both data collection and analysis are done at each and every library level: local, system, consortial, and shared collections. However, as the levels broadened, the difference between the number of respondents who *collected* and those who *analyzed* at that level increased. While most of those who analyzed data at the local library level also collected that data, there were fewer who collected the data that was analyzed at the more expansive levels.

The local library is the predominant level for library collection data collection and analysis, as reported by more than three-quarters of the responding libraries. The responses for collection and analysis activities were fairly evenly distributed between the four levels, with the top three levels consisting of the local library, the library system, and the library consortium. Only 15 of the 67 respondents (22%), however, collected and analyzed data at the local, system, *and* consortial levels.

*How centralized or de-centralized are the responsibilities of data collection and analysis?*

Of particular interest is the structure of data collection and analysis, the *who*, of *who is doing what* aspect of data collection and analysis. It is clear that most libraries distribute the responsibilities across individuals, departments, and committees. While there were a wide variety of organizational structures reported, the typical structure is decentralized, with separate committees or groups handling data collection and analysis.

Of the 41 respondents (61%) who *separate* the responsibilities for the collection from analysis of data, the organizational structures are consistent for both tasks. Generally, about 40% of these libraries reported that separate committees are responsible for data gathering, and these committees most often involve librarians and staff from two or more departments. Committee names, if provided, were fairly generic, including “Collections Team,” “Program Management Center,” and “Collections Steering Committee.” The number of people composing these committees ranges from fewer than five to more than 40, with committees for data analysis being two to three times larger (4–40 members) than those for data collection (2–18 members). Most committees are composed of about 10 members for data analysis and between five and 10 members for data collection. Those committees responsible for *only* data collection are composed mostly, if not wholly, from collections management. Some of these also include the assessment analysts or librarians. Conversely, most committees that focus on *analysis* include subject or liaison librarians and others outside of collections.

About a quarter of the libraries centralize the data collection and/or analysis responsibilities, about half of which are concentrated in a single department with about three staff members devoted to each responsibility; the other half are handled by a single position. Finally, over a third of these 41 respondents indicated other organizational structures, most of which are some combination of collections and subject librarians.

Twenty-six respondents (39%) indicated that the same individual, department, or committee handles data collection and analysis. Of these, four reported a single person. Position titles for these individuals are “Collection and Organizational Data Analysis Librarian,” “Collection Assessment and Analysis Librarian,” “Collection Management Librarian,” and “Collections Strategist.” At three libraries collection departments with 2–8 staff members are responsible for assessment. At 11 libraries (42%) data gathering and analysis responsibilities are centralized in a committee, with an average of six members (range: 3–12). In over two-thirds of these committees half of the members are from collections. Interestingly, only three committees with centralized data collection and analysis responsibilities include an assessment librarian.

### **Commitment of Human Resources Toward Data Collection and Analysis**

Our other major concern regarding human resources was the extent of effort or time devoted to collection assessment. As expected, libraries that centralize the responsibilities of gathering and/or analyzing data into a single position devote a greater proportion of that individual’s time (59%) towards these activities than those that use a single department (45%). However, those that use a department devote an average of 1.4 FTE towards these activities.

Most committees meet monthly, but a few meet as frequently as weekly and others only as needed. Only eight respondents provided estimates of time committed to these activities and these varied



widely, from fewer than 50 hours to more than 2000 hours per year for collecting the data, and from 20 to 200 hours for analyzing data. Extrapolating these estimates across all committee members, these libraries devote an average of 2.4 FTE to collection assessment.

### **Purposes of Collection Assessments**

In the survey, we asked about purposes of *initiating* assessments, as well as how completed assessments were *used*. These are not always one-in-the-same, and we were expecting assessments used for more purposes than those initiated.

As expected, nearly all respondents indicated that collection assessments were initiated for reasons associated with collection development, followed by library administration or other library purposes. Academic reviews, whether for accreditation, new programs, or institutional purposes, were also common purposes reported. Initiating development of a shared collection was selected by nearly half, while just over a third indicated that collection evaluations were initiated to *evaluate* a shared collection. The most commonly mentioned other reasons include moving collections or space re-allocation (n=8), other external reporting (n=5), budgetary purposes (n=8), and weeding or de-selection (n=4). Intriguing comments include “understanding user behavior,” “answer questions from departments about library funding and acquisitions,” and “maximizing our utility.”

Nearly every respondent has used the collection evaluations for the selection of materials for moving, weeding, and/or de-selection (cancellation). More than two-thirds have used the evaluations to demonstrate value and/or justify funding increases to library or campus administration, as well as to evaluate collection strengths and weaknesses, and to adjust allocations of funds. Other uses reported by the majority of respondents include accreditation, estimating costs of upgrading or new collections, and identifying core works. We were impressed by the number of respondents who have used the evaluations for comparison with their peer libraries.

Fewer than half of the respondents have used evaluations to demonstrate the value of the library to patrons, develop or manage a shared collection strategy, or target collections for promotion and/or digitization. Only 12 indicated that the results have been used to evaluate selector effectiveness. Other uses include preservation, promoting faculty outputs, identifying patron interests, determining a strategic use of space, and examining expenditures by format over time.

### **Data Collection Tools, Methods, and Frequency**

For our survey, we were interested in discovering the data collection tools that are used and the frequency of their use. The survey asked respondents to indicate which of 13 software and online services their library has used for storing and analyzing data for collection evaluation purposes and any that they would be interested in using in the future. Respondents reported using, on average, five tools and being interested in using one tool, though one respondent reporting using 11 tools. It should be noted that only 24 of the respondents (36%) identified tools that they were interested in (but had not yet used), suggesting that librarians are taking the initiative and applying the tools they need.

Not surprisingly, all respondents use spreadsheets for analyzing data. The use of database programs or servers was greater than the authors expected—45 respondents (68%) use Microsoft Access, a database server, or both (nearly a quarter of respondents have used both). Most of the remaining options have been used by between a quarter and a third of the respondents.

Over 80% of the respondents have either used or are interested in using data visualization tools like Tableau. Between a third and half are either using or interested in using most of the tools, with databases, spreadsheets, and visualization receiving the lion’s share of responses. A moderate number of respondents expressed interest in using SpringShare’s LibAnalytics and/or statistical software like SPSS.

Interestingly, 18 respondents indicated that they have used a “system developed locally/in-house.” Data storage systems were the most common solutions listed by these respondents, but the underlying foundation of these varied from spreadsheets to relational databases to more sophisticated data warehouses. They reported storing a variety of data, including e-resource usage, expenditures, and journal holdings and/or overlap. The emphasis of these local data systems appears to be on integrating data from multiple sources. Web or proxy server logs were also mentioned.

Most respondents indicated that data is collected annually, with only about a third reporting that data is collected monthly or quarterly. The most commonly reported other frequency was “as needed” or “ad hoc,” usually reported in addition to the other frequencies. The data that librarians need for collection evaluation is generally directly accessible. Just over one-third reported that most of the data, and another third reported that some of the data, is accessible. Another 11 respondents reported that the data is accessible upon request, and only four reported that some data is not accessible at all. Among the other responses, a distinction was made with *ease* of access.

### **Data Collection Dream Tools**

The purpose of this question was to stimulate the development of tools not already available or created. In retrospect, this question could have been phrased more clearly, as some of the responses (8 of 42) were for tools that already exist, e.g., any ERM, the WorldShare CAS, Greenglass, and Tableau. Of the expected responses, 17 were for improvements to existing systems, primarily the integrated library systems and the resource usage tools. The requested improvements centered on ease of use and integration with other data, notably cost and print usage. Also requested were improvements in generating reports and the ability to analyze data at levels that are higher (e.g., consortial) and lower (e.g., patron groups) than the individual library. Of the responses that could be considered “dream tools,” the key concern was for data aggregation and integration, between and within systems. Some responses were very general:

“It would blend financial and usage data in an accurate, useful, actionable way and would be open source and scalable to consortial/shared activities.”

“Internal database to allow all collected data to be in one place and have the ability to run reports and combo reports to have a better ‘big picture’ of what data is collected, allow efficiency, and help expedite the annual reporting.”

“Allow data aggregation and analysis from disparate data collection systems.”

Others requested specific combinations, notably for the aggregation of e-resource usage data, print circulation, and expenditures. It is clear that the respondents were requesting data management and analysis tools that brought together data to answer questions related to collection coverage, usage, and efficiencies. This requires bringing data out of the silos and integrating the counts of titles and/or volumes, records of usage, and costs. There were two suggestions that were quite different from the others:

“Would be great if our automated monitoring systems (gate counters, environmental monitors) would auto-report to a server.”

“A tool that scrapes bibliographic information from grant proposals, faculty annual reports, materials in the institutional repository, course management sites, etc. but that allows for anonymity.”

### **Data Analysis Methods and Frequency**

Our survey asked respondents to indicate the use or interest in using a myriad of measures and methods for collection analysis. These were organized into the four categories in the key textbook, *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management* (2nd ed.) (Johnson, 2009), and adapted here:

Type of Measure	Use/User-based	Collections-based
Quantitative	Circulation In-house usage ILL/document-delivery E-resource usage Cost-per-use	Number of titles & volumes Growth in size Expenditures and trends Citation analyses Ratios (e.g., size to expenditures, print to electronic)
Qualitative	Observation studies of user behaviors Surveys of opinions Usability testing Focus groups	Citation analysis List-checking Collection mapping (e.g., Conspectus) Brief tests of collection strength Peer-comparisons

(Figure 7-1 Methods of collection analysis, p. 229)

Quantitative collections-based measures or methods are the most commonly used in collection evaluations, with nearly three-quarters of the survey respondents having used three or four of the methods at least once. They most frequently reported using these methods at least annually, except for analyzing the collection's currency, which had been done as needed, though a surprising number (15 or 24%) indicated that they had never analyzed collection currency or age. The vast majority of the respondents analyze collection growth and expenditures annually or even more frequently. Most analyze the collection size by subject and/or format annually or as needed.

While the responding libraries have used qualitative measures of the collection, they are not necessarily a *regular* part of collection evaluations for most respondents, nor is the use of these methods widespread. While over three-quarters have used accreditation guidelines, and nearly two-thirds have used peer library comparisons, global citation analysis, list-checking, or direct evaluations, nearly two-thirds of respondents have never used the Conspectus or Brief Tests of Collection Strength methods. Indeed, "Never used" was *the most* or the *second most* selected response for *all* qualitative collection-based methods. While over half of the respondents indicated they have used four or more of the eight methods listed, there was greater variation in the frequency of their use. Most who use these measures applied them as needed, rather than on a regular basis. Furthermore, there was little interest in using these measures, with fewer than a third of the respondents indicating any plans to use these methods, primarily global citation analysis (e.g., impact factor) and comparisons of holdings with peer-libraries.

There was similarly wide variation in the use of the quantitative user-based measures for collection evaluations, with most respondents reporting using between four and six methods. Generally, the more traditional measures of circulation and ILL requests by user groups are used annually, as well as usage of electronic resources (which was the most commonly reported method). Conversely, gap analysis and MINES for Libraries® have never been used by the majority of respondents. Most of the measures are used either annually or as needed. Unlike the other groups, nearly half of the respondents indicated plans to use one to three of these methods. Local citation analysis was the most commonly selected method that respondents are planning to use, followed by gap analysis and ILL requests by patron groups.

There was a greater response to the qualitative user-based methods than the other groups of methods, with nearly 75% reporting using three or more of the methods at least once. This explains the fewer number of respondents who indicated that they are planning to use at least one of the methods. The two key exceptions are the comparison of syllabi to holdings and the mapping of courses to the collection, both of which are very labor-intensive. However, a modest number of these respondents are planning on using these methods (10 and 18, respectively). Most gather feedback from the primary stakeholders (patrons and librarians) on some kind of regular basis, about a third reported doing so more frequently than annually.

Only fourteen respondents reported other methods, many of which were variations on those listed in the survey questions. For example, respondents rank journals by usage, by faculty perception, and by global citation analysis. Almost all of the projects described include some aspect of usage, many focusing on format such as e-books, journals, or print monographs. It is clear that usage has become the prominent, if not the most important, measure for collection assessment.

The commercial collection analysis tool used by the most respondents (currently, previously, or interested in using) is the YBP Gobi Peer Groups, followed closely by the OCLC Collection Evaluation/Analysis System and the ProQuest Intota Assessment. The Bowker Book Analysis had the most “never used” responses. GreenGlass (aka Sustainable Collections Service from OCLC) was the most commonly mentioned other tool that respondents are *currently* using. Other systems include data management & visualization tools (e.g., Cognos and Tableau), usage data management, overlap analysis tools, Ulrich’s Serials Analysis, and UStat.

Interestingly, only eight respondents (13%) have used freely available data, most notably ARL and IPEDS statistics. Other data sets mentioned include CUFTS (for database overlap), the Scopus Journal Metrics (Source Normalized Impact per Page (SNIP), Impact per Publication (IPP), and SCImago Journal Rank (SJR)), and the WorldCat Expert Search feature to compare holdings.

### **Collection Assessment Results Dissemination**

#### *Audience for and Format of Reports*

We were interested in learning how libraries disseminate their collection assessment results, both the formats and the audiences, essentially, “who gets what.” Not surprisingly, those internal to the library are the most common recipients of information (over 90%), with library administration, collection managers, and subject specialists receiving slightly more responses than other library staff. There is a notable drop in the number of responses for the next cluster, institutional administration or oversight (roughly 70–80%), while about half make their information available to the general public. Only a few respondents reported other audiences, and these tended to be funders and alumni.

Print or PDF reports and in-person presentations are the most commonly used formats for sharing data (60 respondents each or 92%) across all constituent categories. Many respondents (51 or 79%) disseminate these files through the library intranet (primarily to library staff) and 32 (49%) use the public website (for a broader audience). By far, the institutional repository is the least used mode for disseminating collection assessment results; only five respondents selected this option. While almost all of the respondents share assessment data through written reports and presentations/slide-shows that include charts and graphs, only 29 respondents reported using interactive visualizations/dashboards to represent their findings.

Another purpose of this survey was to determine the accessibility of the summary or raw data gathered for collection assessment purposes. The goal was to determine the data sharing environment of the ARL respondents; 63 responded to questions pertaining to summary data and 58 responded to questions pertaining to unprepared/raw data. Most of the respondents (41 or 65%) indicated that stakeholders have either direct access or access upon request to summary collections evaluation and assessment data. Another 18 (29%) provide more limited access to the summary data, and only three indicated that most summary data is not accessible at all. Twenty-two respondents (38%) reported that most raw data is accessible upon request and an equal number reported that some data is accessible. Eleven (19%) indicated that raw data is not accessible at all.

### **Collection Assessment Outcomes**

We were very interested in learning the outcomes of collection assessments, as well as what collection assessment challenges libraries face. The top two results of collection assessment have been an

increased understanding of the scope and breadth of collections by librarians and changes to collection development policies or priorities.

In terms of more objective forms of outcomes, nearly two-thirds experienced an increase in funding targeted to building or enhancing a collection, and more than a third indicated that funding for overall collection development had increased as a result of collection assessment reports. A smaller set of respondents (18 or 28%) indicated that they had changed their funding algorithms or formulas as a result of collection assessments.

As expected, collection assessment outcomes serve a variety of purposes specific to collection management, including supporting shared collecting initiatives with partner libraries, informing funding and collection development decisions, de-selection and weeding practices, and changing approaches to approval plan initiatives.

### Challenges

Respondents were asked to describe the top three challenges encountered at their library when assessing collections. This question was purposefully open-ended to generate the most comprehensive list and 54 respondents described challenges that fell into seventeen broad thematic categories:

Challenge	Responses	%
Consistency and quality of data	31	23%
Staffing, time, or cost constraints	27	20%
Expertise issues	20	15%
Data integration	15	11%
Data acquisition	13	9%
Communication	8	6%
System and/or hardware deficiencies	7	5%
Organizational culture	7	5%
Volume of content to be assessed/overwhelmed	5	4%
Application	4	3%
Grand Total	137	100%

Issues with data acquisition, integration, consistency, volume, and quality were the most commonly cited challenges, accounting for close to half of those reported. Data were also mentioned in other categories, including being overwhelmed, system deficiencies, and expertise issues. It is clear that librarians are frustrated by the lack of consistent data and standards, as well as the inability to integrate the myriad of systems easily. Typical comments included:

“Messy data. Oftentimes, the data that is used to inform assessment decisions is messy, inconsistent, problematic, and full of caveats.”

“Data over time is difficult, since we have changed the ILS a number of times, and not all data was migrated, and querying the underlying database must be done in another fashion.”

“Not having good benchmarking data for meaningful comparisons.”

The other major sets of issues are with resources, or lack thereof. These may be lack of staff, time (which could also be considered lack of staff), financial resources, and expertise. These represent at least 35% of the challenges, given that they could also apply to the issue of being overwhelmed and some of the data issues. Typical comments included:

“Resources to encourage an expectation of assessment, this includes personnel and collaborating across teams.”

“There are an overwhelming number of resources to evaluate and a lack of staff coordination, time, and interest.”

Expertise issues, communication, and organizational culture are also major concerns, representing 20% of the challenges reported. Some of the challenges of expertise are technical, focusing particularly on data (analysis, manipulation, etc.), but most are conceptual. Librarians are not able to make sense of the data, with several mentioning the sheer complexity of assessment. This extends into the communication challenges, specifically communicating the results and translating data and analysis for non-experts. The respondents also expressed frustration with their attempts to change the library culture to one of assessment, or even to have their work result in any changes. Typical comments included:

“Assessment not tied to strategic goals, so recommendations not necessarily followed.”

“Administrators at the university level largely deaf to evidence of need as presented by the library.”

“We do additional work to collect data to tell the story, but it doesn’t translate to additional funding; so it is worth all the work?”

Several of the challenges described were actually applications of the assessments, specifically for evaluation of the use of space and funding.

## **Collection Assessment Skills**

### *Training*

Staff training appears to be mostly informal and on-the-job. Fewer than half of the respondents indicated that staff have received formal training in collection assessment or evaluation. Of these respondents, two mentioned the ALCTS Fundamentals of Collection Assessment online course, but most mentioned more informal or technical training. The technical training focuses on data management and analysis. Two respondents mentioned that they are developing training programs.

### *Skills Ranking by Importance*

Another goal of this survey was to determine the gap between the most important assessment skills and the skills that library staff are lacking. The rankings in the responses to the questions about which skills are most *important* and which skills library staff still *need* are so similar that they suggest that the respondents misunderstood the intended distinction between the questions.

Overall, analytical/critical thinking, collection assessment, and collection development principles were ranked the three most important skills. Knowledge of spreadsheet software was fourth, but database skills ranked least important. The next group of skills includes subject expertise, data management, and statistical analysis. Knowledge of the publishing industry and data visualization/chart-making skills are less important.

The open-ended responses to a question about the desired continuing education opportunities supports the idea that staff are, indeed, lacking the necessary assessment skills. Data management, critical thinking, and statistical analysis figure prominently in the educational opportunities desired. The last is paradoxical to the relatively modest rank of *importance* given to statistical analysis (average was 7<sup>th</sup> and mode was 8<sup>th</sup>). General collection assessment skills were listed next, followed by technical skills. Interestingly, two responses were focused on communication.

## **Collection Assessment Climate**

The survey next asked respondents to indicate how well a set of statements reflected the assessment climate at their library. The three statements that received the highest ratings indicate that library

administration supports collection assessment, internal stakeholders are interested in the results of collection evaluation, and collection assessment has increased at the responding libraries over the last five years. The next grouping indicates that qualitative data is the primary means of assessing collections and the results of evaluations are used to make collection development decisions, but the data is still difficult to gather. Few respondents believe that their *external* stakeholders are interested in the results of collection evaluations.

The responses to a follow-up question about general library attitudes toward assessment group more around the middle of the scale than those about the assessment climate. For example, the three most common responses to “Collection evaluations are difficult to interpret...” (2, 3 and 4) were within four percentage points (26%, 29%, and 30%, respectively). For the statement comparing the importance of quantitative versus qualitative data the middle response (3) received over half the responses (37 or 56%).

Generally, the respondents most strongly believe that libraries should share collection analyses and data (65% positive). There was also general agreement that collection evaluations should be used to adjust allocation of funding for collections (53%), and that collection assessment is supported by the theoretical foundations of collection development (51%). There was a weak consensus that collection evaluation should be centralized (46% positive and 37% neutral), and no real consensus on the difficulty of interpreting collection evaluations (fairly equal distribution across positive, neutral, and negative ratings).

### **Successful Collection Assessment Processes**

Forty-eight respondents provided examples of successful collection assessment processes at their libraries. The most common thread reported (13 respondents) was the collection and analysis of usage statistics. This was useful for both selection (and de-selection) purposes, as well as observing longitudinal trends. The next most-common thread (11) was the use of evidence-based decision making regarding differing aspects of collection development and management, including selection and de-selection of electronic resources, the selection of resources to move to storage, and the allocation of funds to collections. Another common thread was collaboration, reported in one form or another by nine respondents. This collaboration was usually among other library staff, although two mentioned collaboration with external partners. The other successes varied from disciplinary collection assessment and data sharing to improvements to processes, negotiations with vendors, communication, and data collection. A couple of the more intriguing responses included the ability to assess interdisciplinary collections and greater support from library administrations.

### **Desired Change in Collection Assessment Processes**

Thirty-nine respondents described aspects of their collection assessment process that they would change. The most common thread (17 respondents) related to data: quality, collection, integration, and the sharing thereof. This was often associated with the second most common thread, that of process improvement (14 respondents). Other aspects of the process needing improvement include increased staffing, staff development, planning of assessment, and improved efficiency. Interestingly, while five respondents suggested greater centralization of data collection and analysis, one respondent indicated that the subject bibliographers at that institution were invested in more responsibilities for assessment of their subject areas. Also interesting were two respondents who indicated a desire for improvements in collaboration, particularly with library staff.

### **Additional Comments**

Most of these comments related to the unique environments of each institution. Most notably among these were comments related to staffing, or lack thereof. Several mentioned having positions for

which assessment was only part of the responsibilities. The respondents believe that these “part-time” assessment librarian positions were not enough to conduct activities necessary for proper collection assessment. Several respondents mentioned efforts to encourage the adoption of collection assessment methods by the subject librarians themselves, thus decentralizing the process. Finally, there were comments related to the complexities of collection assessment which this survey may not be able to discern. Indeed, the survey itself was quite complex, yet still did enable us to refine the analysis enough to tease out the wide array of combinations of processes, data, responsibilities, inputs, and outputs. We do hope that this will provide some context from which future research may be initiated to better address these complexities.

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