

User Needs Assessment to Support Collection Management Decisions

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and the Application of the New Measures for Library Assessment*

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Needs Assessment Using Large Scale Surveys at the University of Washington Libraries

Steve Hiller, UW Libraries

For ALA Annual Meeting

Washington D.C. June 28, 1998

Why Do User Needs Assessment?

- **Decisions based on data not assumptions -“assumicide”**

Fundamental to User-Centered Library

- Users determine quality, importance and success
- Evaluation and assessment focus on user outcomes
- Align collections and resources with user needs
- Identify differences/similarities in needs and use by academic areas/groups
- Support fair and equitable distribution of funds

Ensure libraries are responsive to their communities

Use Multiple Approaches for Assessment

- **User Needs Assessment and Behavior**
 - Surveys for satisfaction, importance, use patterns, priorities
 - Focus groups/interviews identify issues from user perspective
 - Usability and observation for the how's and why's
- **Measuring Usage**
 - Print
 - Electronic
- **Calculating Costs**
 - Actual costs
 - Cost per use
- **Collections Assessment**

User Needs Assessment: What We Want to Know

- Who are our customers (and potential customers)?
- What are their teaching, learning and research interests?
- What are their needs for library services and resources?
- How aware are they of library services and resources?
- How do they currently use library/information resources?
- How would they prefer to do so?
- How do they differ from each other in library use/needs?
- How does the library add value to their work?

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Assessment Methods Used

- Large scale user surveys every 3 years (“triennial survey”): 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004
 - All faculty
 - Samples of undergraduate and graduate students
 - 2004 survey Web-based (with paper option for faculty)
- In-library use surveys every 3 years beginning 1993
- LibQUAL+™ in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003
- Focus groups (annually since 1998)
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability
- Information about assessment program available at:
<http://www.lib.washington.edu/assessment/>

UW Triennial Library Use Survey

Number of Respondents and Response Rate 1992-2004

Large number of respondents allows for analysis within groups

	2004	2001	1998	1995	1992
Faculty	1554 40%	1345 36%	1503 40%	1359 31%	1108 28%
Grad Student	627 40%	597 40%	457 46%	409 41%	560 56%
Undergrad	502 25%	497 25%	787 39%	463 23%	407 41%

UW Triennial Survey: Core Questions

- **Importance**
 - Sources for work
 - Information resource types
 - Priorities for the library
- **Satisfaction**
 - Hours
 - Specific services
 - Resource types/collections
 - Overall
- **Use Patterns**
 - Frequency by access method used (in-person, remote)
 - Frequency of in-person library visits by type of use
 - Frequency of remote use by type of use and location
 - Libraries used on a regular basis

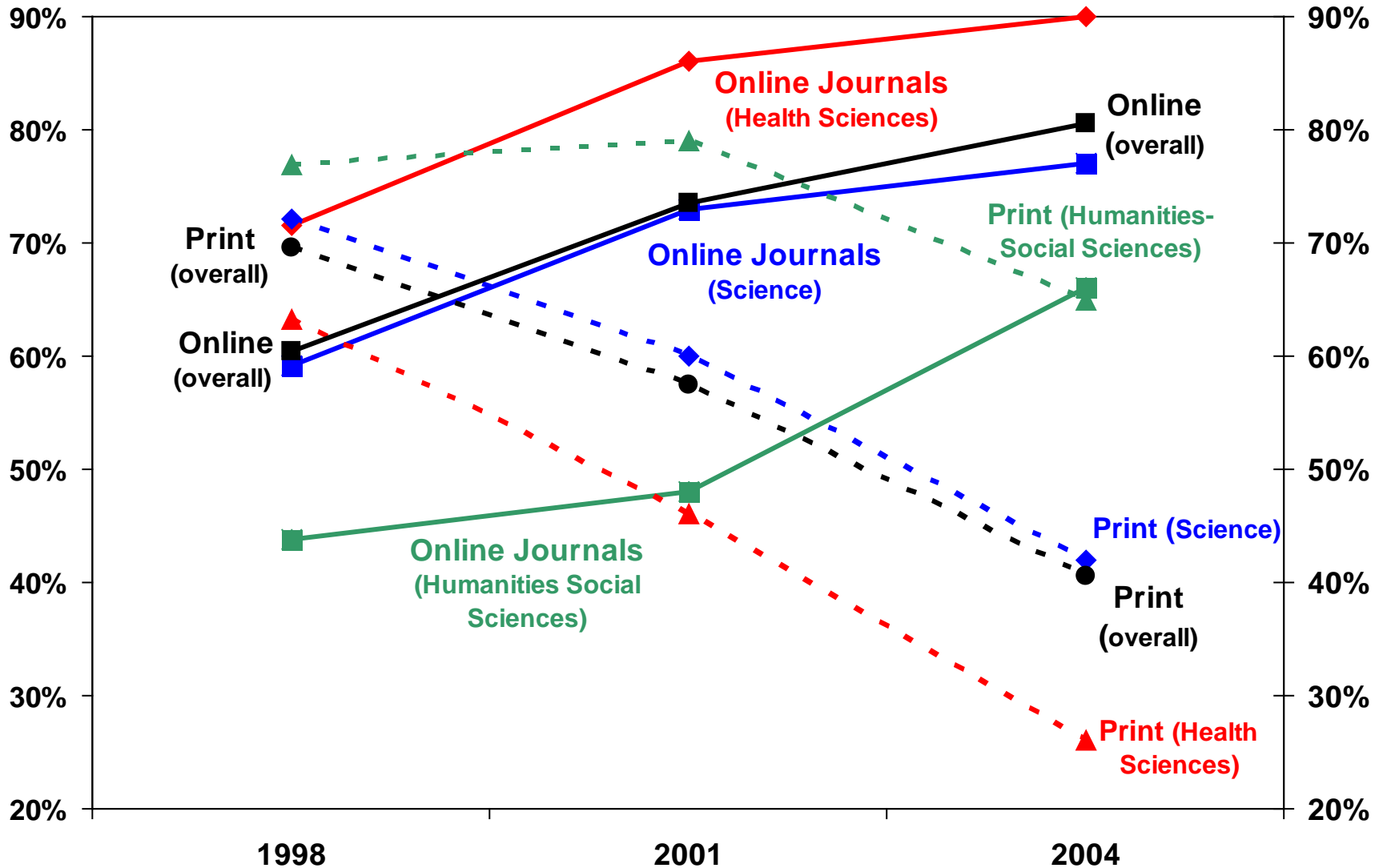
Library Use Patterns 1998, 2001, 2004

(% of each group who use library at least weekly, change from previous survey)

	Visit 1998	Visit 2001	Visit 2004	Remote 1998	Remote 2001	Remote 2004
Faculty Change	47%	40% -15%	29% -28%	73%	79% +8%	91% +15%
Grad Change	78%	59% -24%	52% -12%	63%	75% +19%	87% +16%
Undergrad Change	67%	61% -9%	61%	43%	54% +26%	57% +6%

Print/Online Priority by Academic Area Faculty 1998, 2001, 2004

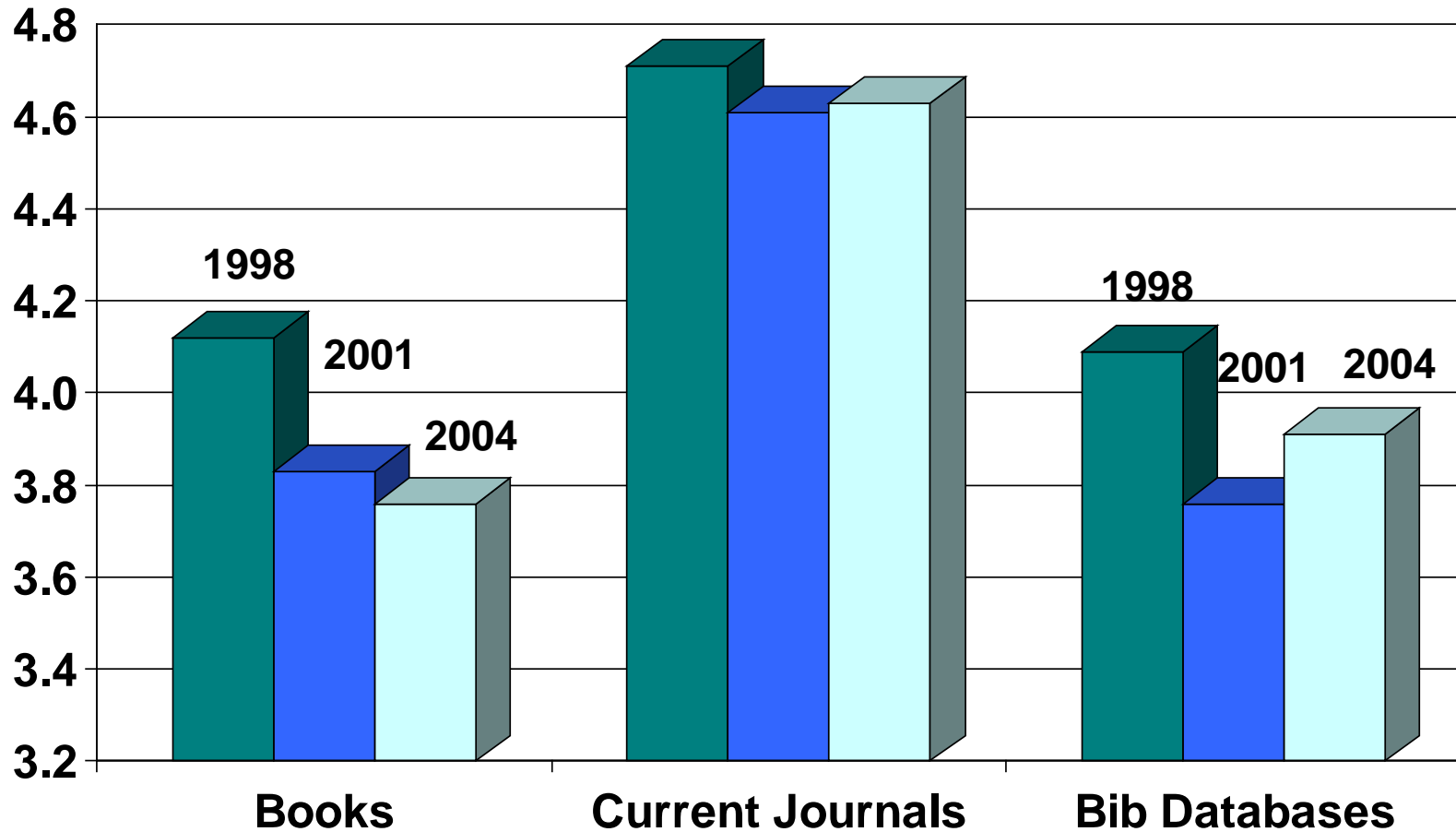
(% in each group identifying as priority)



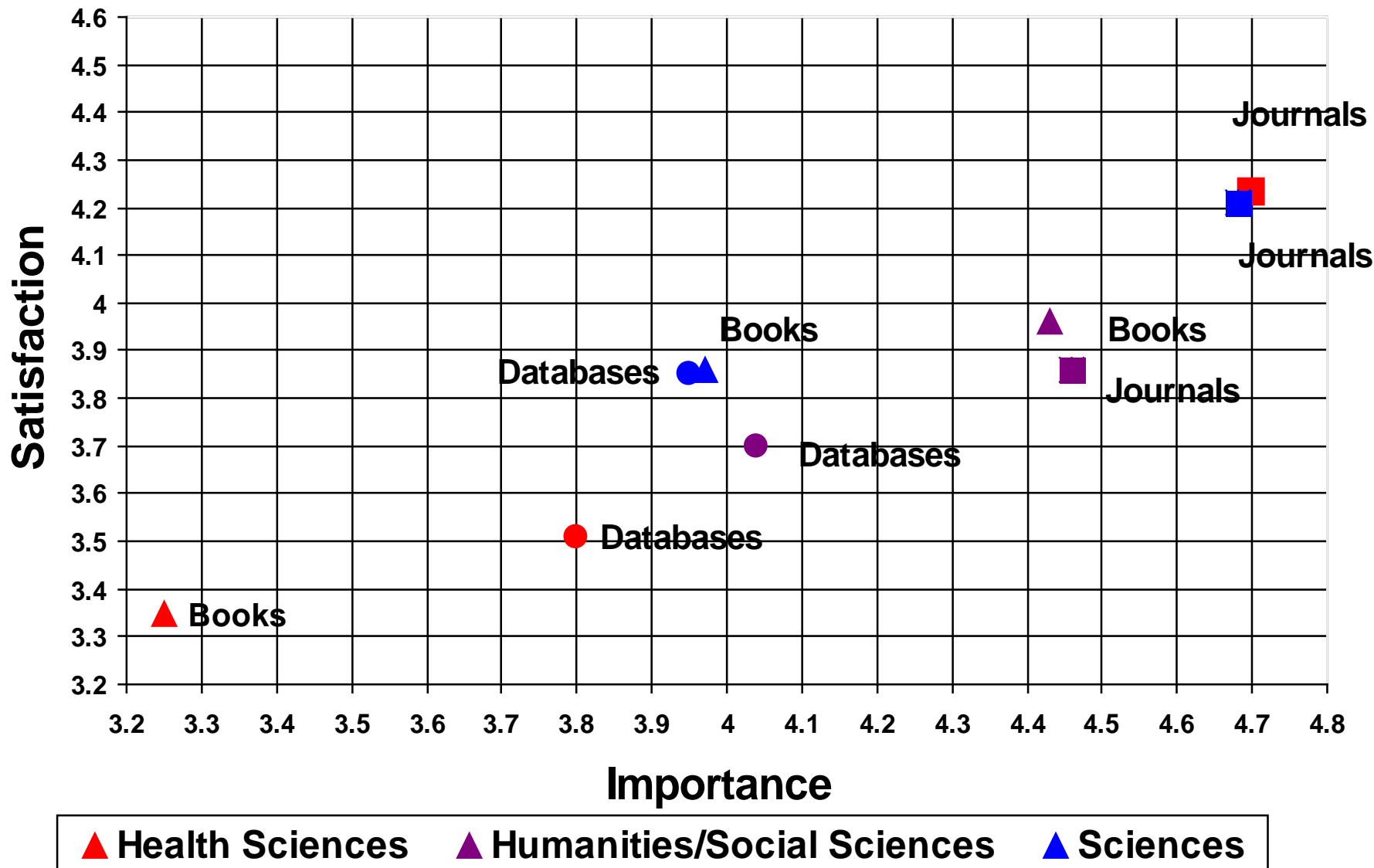
Importance of Resource Types

Faculty 1998, 2001, 2004

Scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

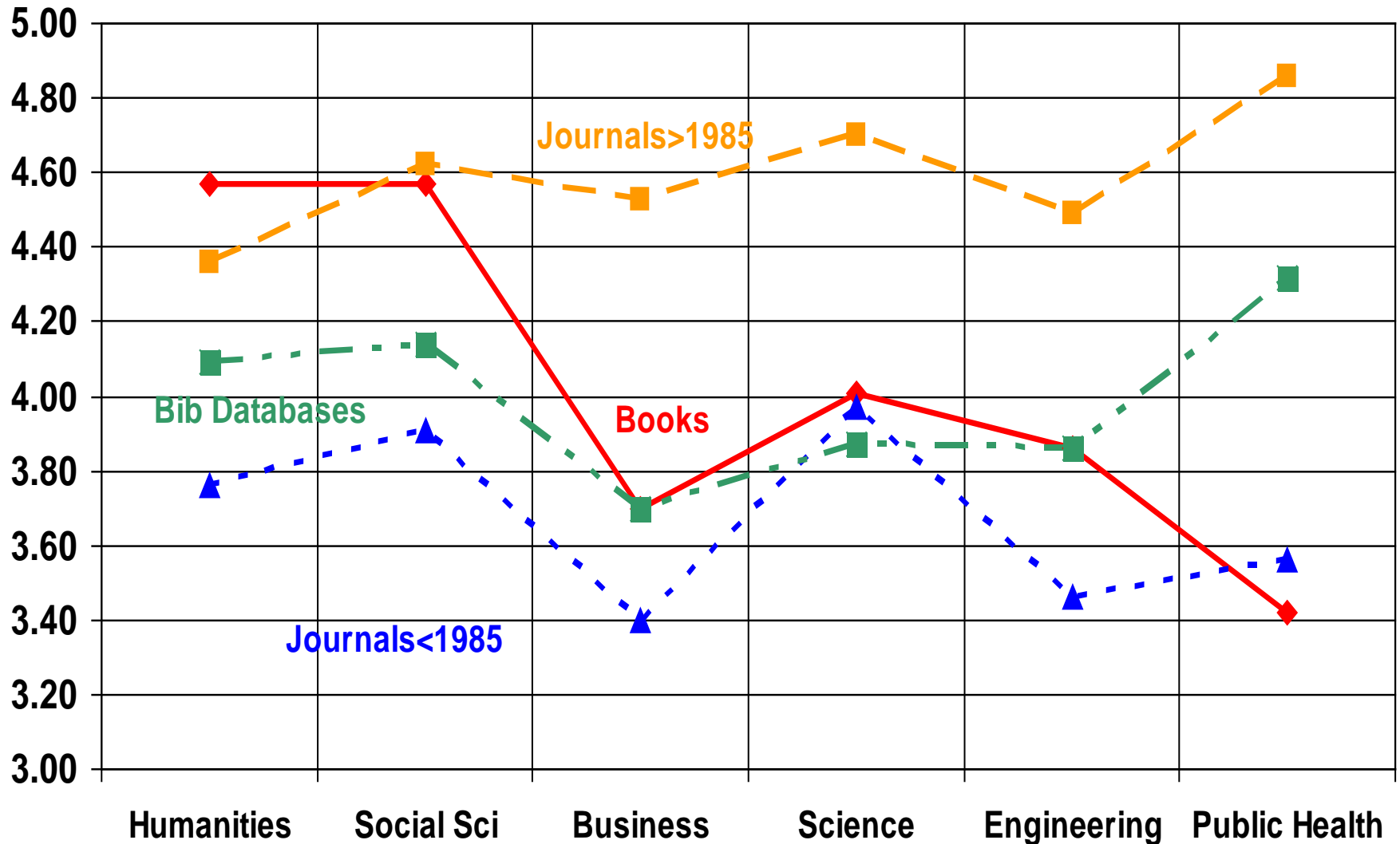


Faculty Importance/Satisfaction with Resource Types by Broad Academic Area 2004



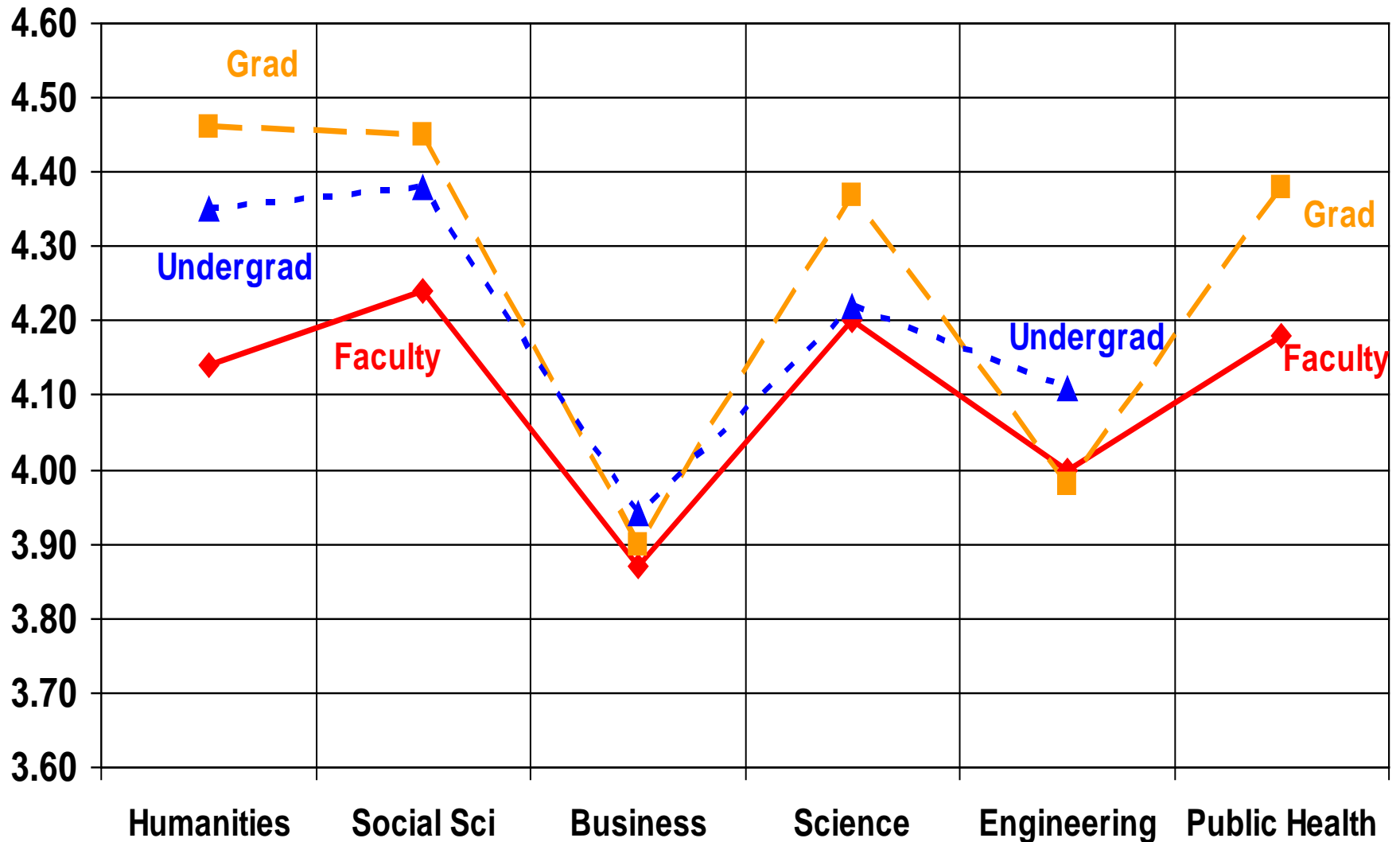
2004 Resource Type Importance

Faculty By Selected Colleges



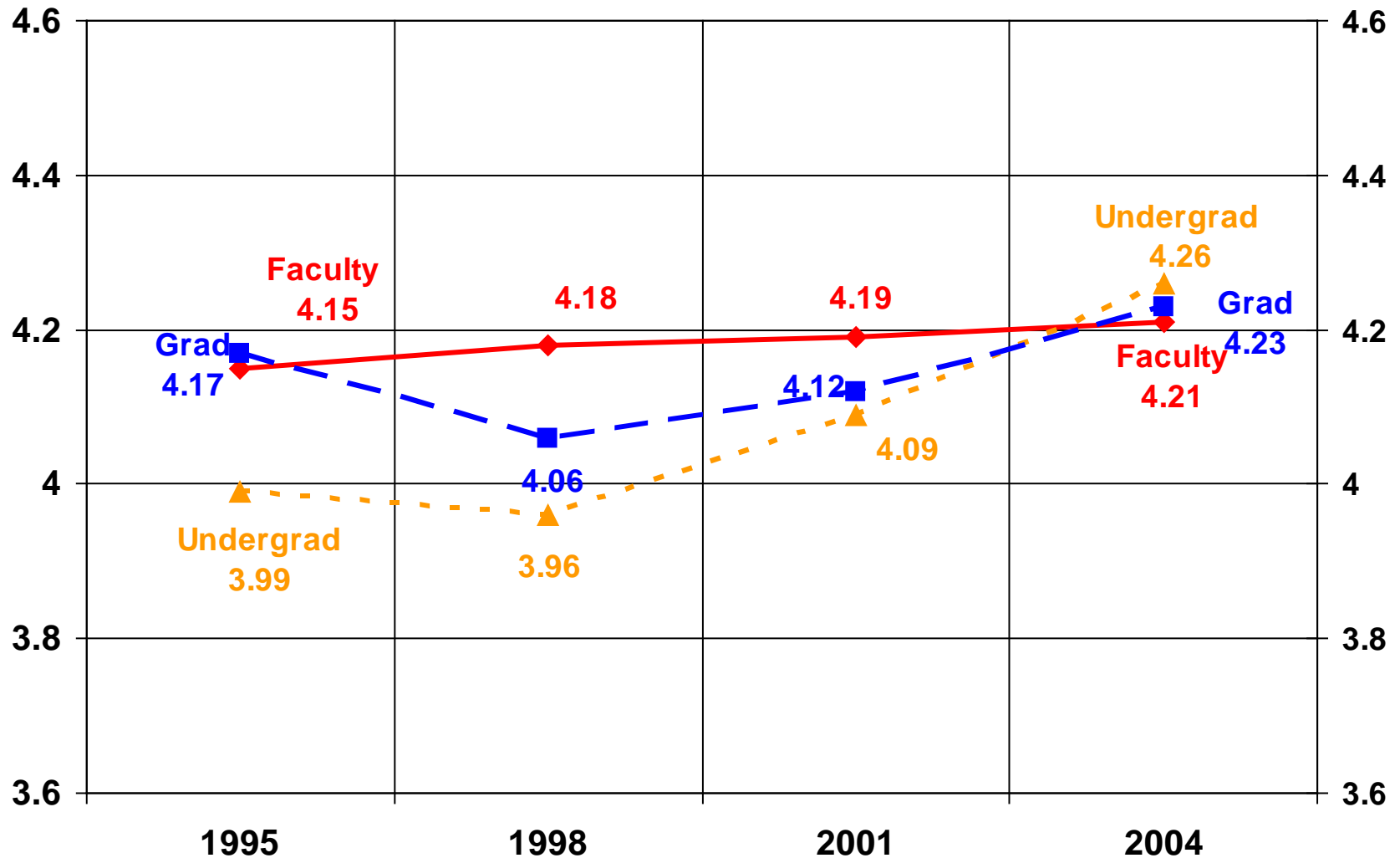
2004 Overall Collections Satisfaction

By Group in Selected Colleges



Overall Collections Satisfaction by Group

1995, 1998, 2001, 2004



2002/03 Focus Groups: Findings

- The information environment is too complex
- General search engines (e.g. Google) are preferred over library licensed/provided interfaces
- Undergrads have difficulty determining which library sources to use
- Faculty “dumbing down” library research assignments
- Ubiquity of library research – any place, any time has changed research patterns
- Availability online is more efficient way to research
- The personal connection with a librarian is important

Guided Observation (March 2003)

Bibliographic Database Searching

- Faculty and graduate students search very differently than we think they should
- Common observations included:
 - Prefer to use single keyword search box
 - Little use of Boolean commands
 - Limits or format changes rarely employed
 - Commands need to be on first page or lost
 - Visible links to full-text critical
- **Important features for librarians are not necessarily important to faculty and students**

What We've Learned from User Needs Assessment about the UW Community

- Libraries remain the most important source of information used for teaching, learning and research
- Satisfaction with the libraries is exceptionally high
- Library needs/use patterns vary by and within academic areas and groups
- Remote access is preferred method and has changed the way faculty and students work and use libraries
- Faculty and students use libraries differently than librarians think (or prefer them too)
- Library/information environment is perceived as too complex; users find simpler ways (Google) to get info

How We've Used Assessment Data to Support Collection Management

- Move to electronic only access for science journals
- Provide access to additional titles online
- Acquire online backfiles selectively based on user need
- Move older serial runs to storage in selected areas
- Increase book budgets in some subject areas (e.g. Math)
- Review value of bibliographic databases in selected areas
- Better understand differences within groups as well as between groups
- Develop better resource discovery tools and ways to access and retrieve online information remotely