

# **User Needs Assessment to Support Collection Management Decisions**

Steve Hiller

University of Washington Libraries

hiller@u.washington.edu

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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?

# University of Washington Libraries

## 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**

|                     | <b>2004</b>               | <b>2001</b>               | <b>1998</b>               | <b>1995</b>               | <b>1992</b>               |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Faculty</b>      | <b>1560</b><br><b>40%</b> | <b>1345</b><br><b>36%</b> | <b>1503</b><br><b>40%</b> | <b>1359</b><br><b>31%</b> | <b>1108</b><br><b>28%</b> |
| <b>Grad Student</b> | <b>627</b><br><b>40%</b>  | <b>597</b><br><b>40%</b>  | <b>457</b><br><b>46%</b>  | <b>409</b><br><b>41%</b>  | <b>560</b><br><b>56%</b>  |
| <b>Undergrad</b>    | <b>502</b><br><b>25%</b>  | <b>497</b><br><b>25%</b>  | <b>787</b><br><b>39%</b>  | <b>463</b><br><b>23%</b>  | <b>407</b><br><b>41%</b>  |

# 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



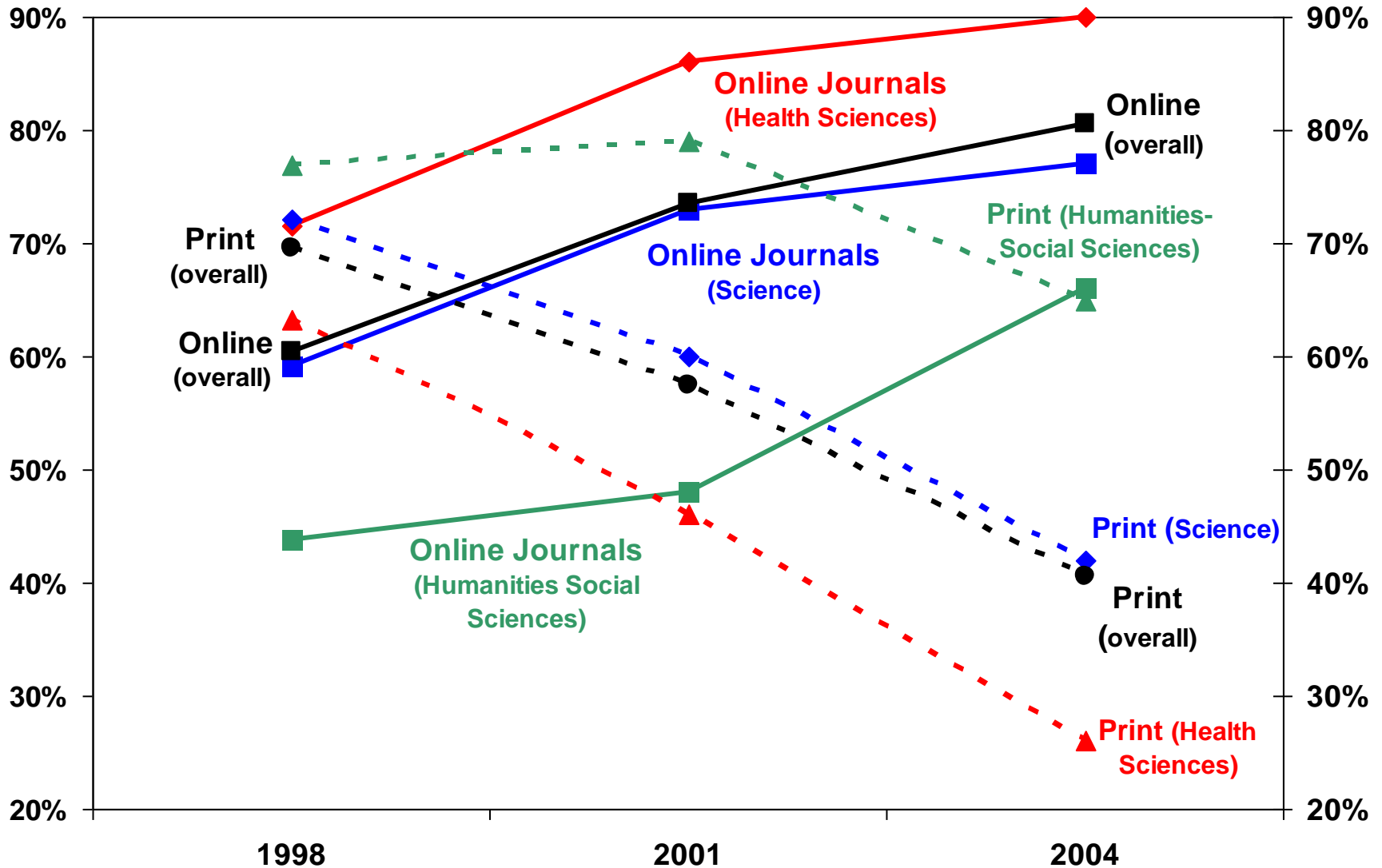
# Library Use Patterns 1998, 2001, 2004

(% of each group who use library at least weekly)

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

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

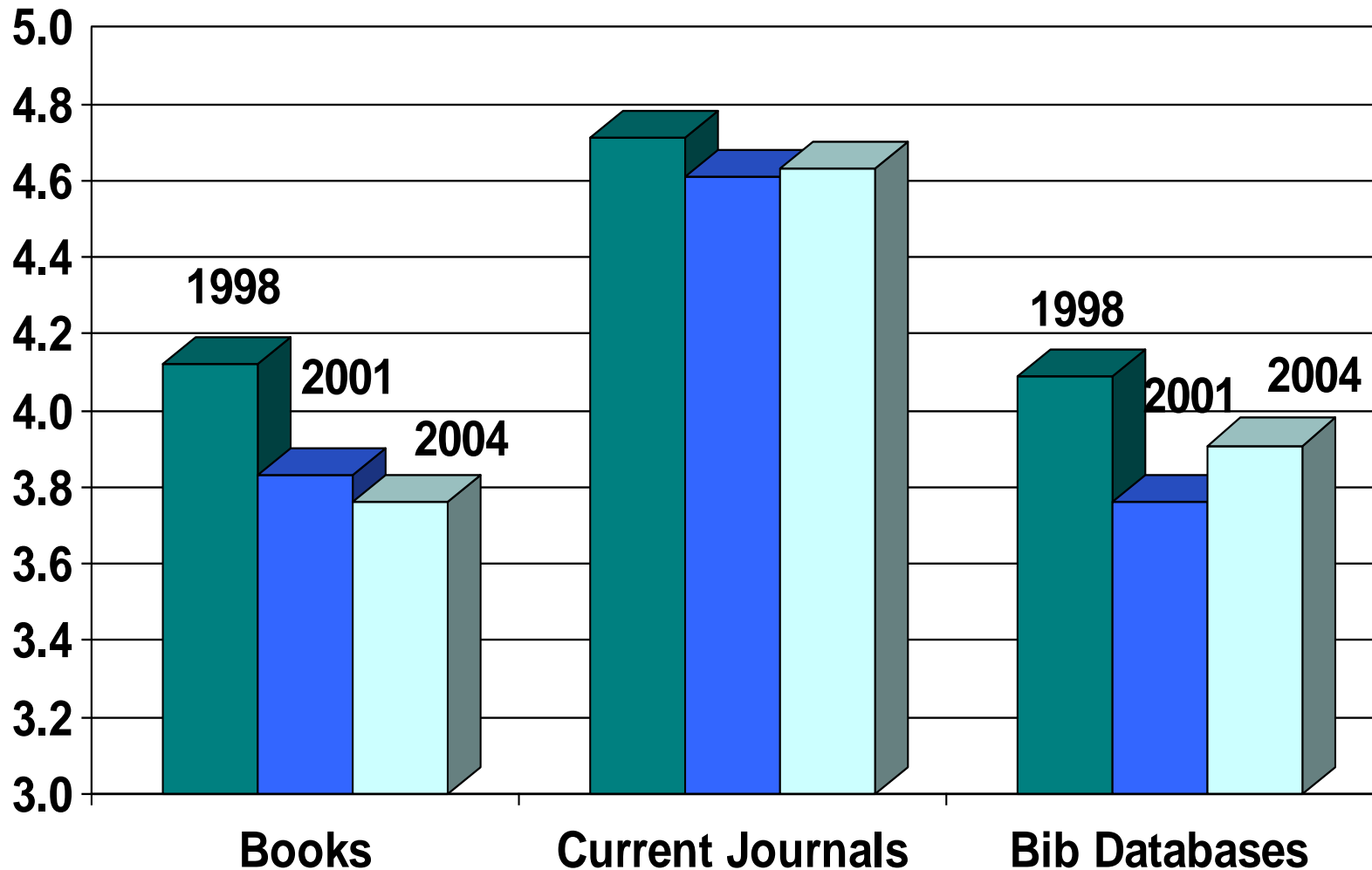
(% in each group identifying as priority)



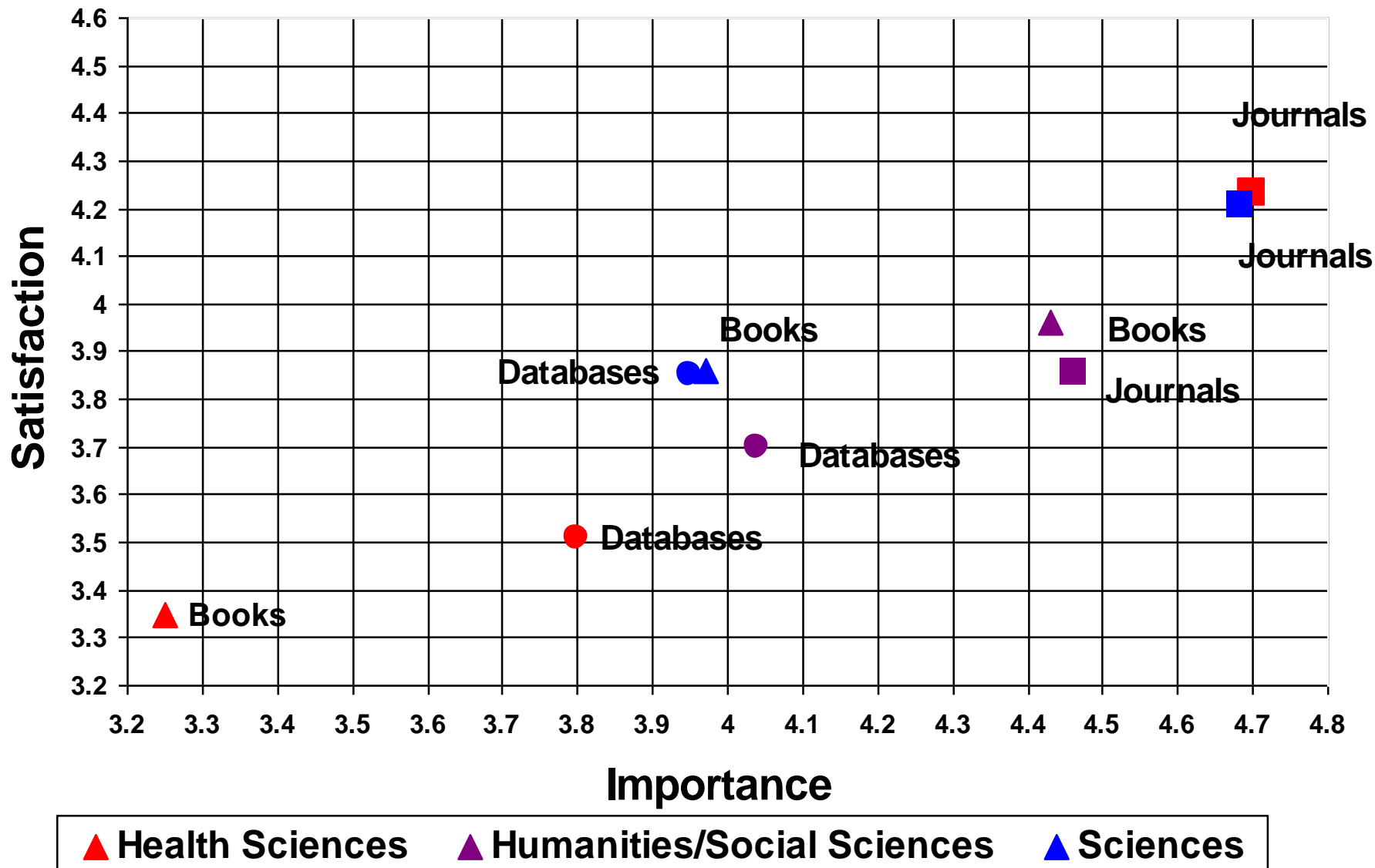
# Importance of Resource Types

## Faculty 1998, 2001, 2004

Scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)

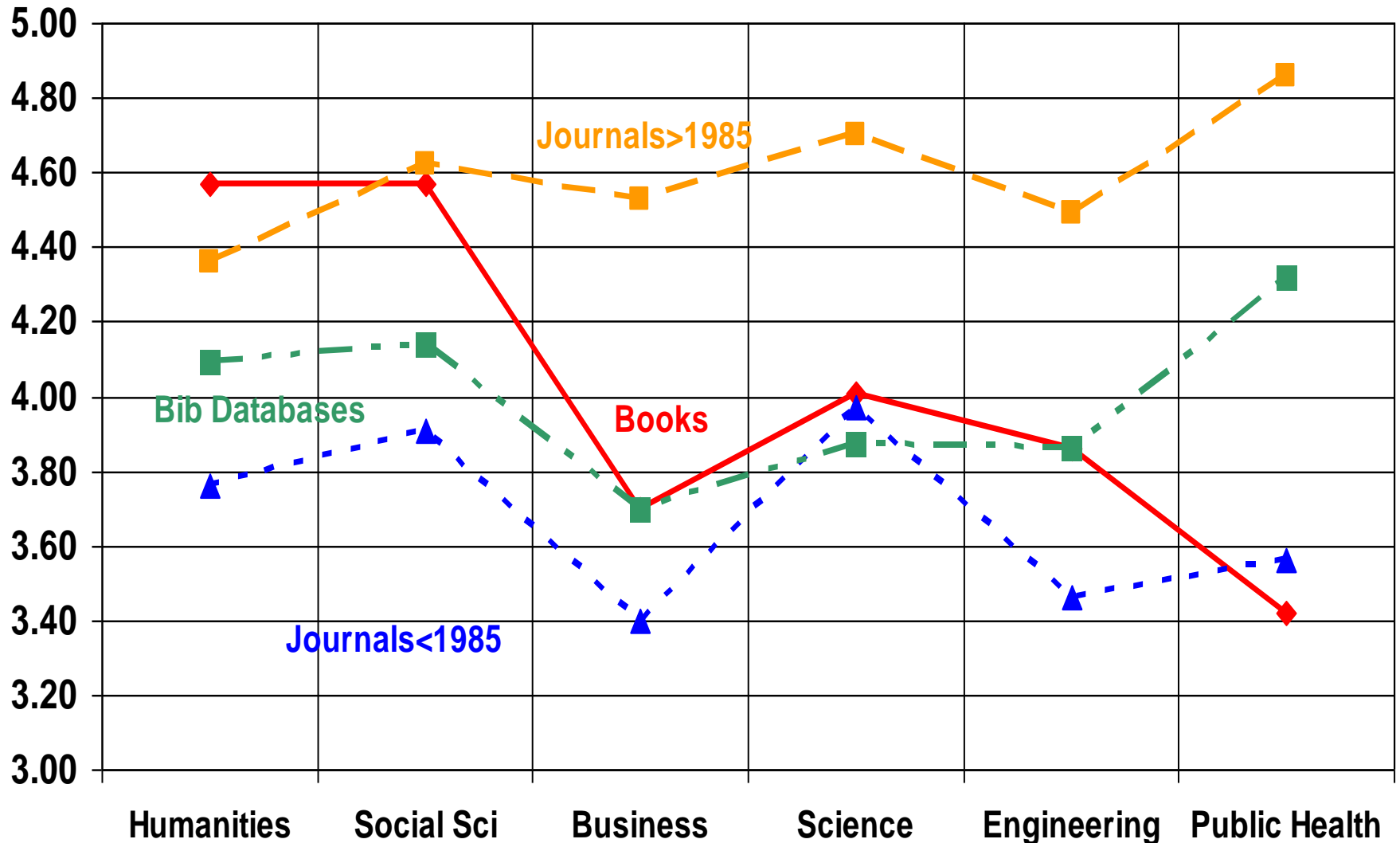


# Faculty Importance/Satisfaction with Resource Types by Broad Academic Area 2004



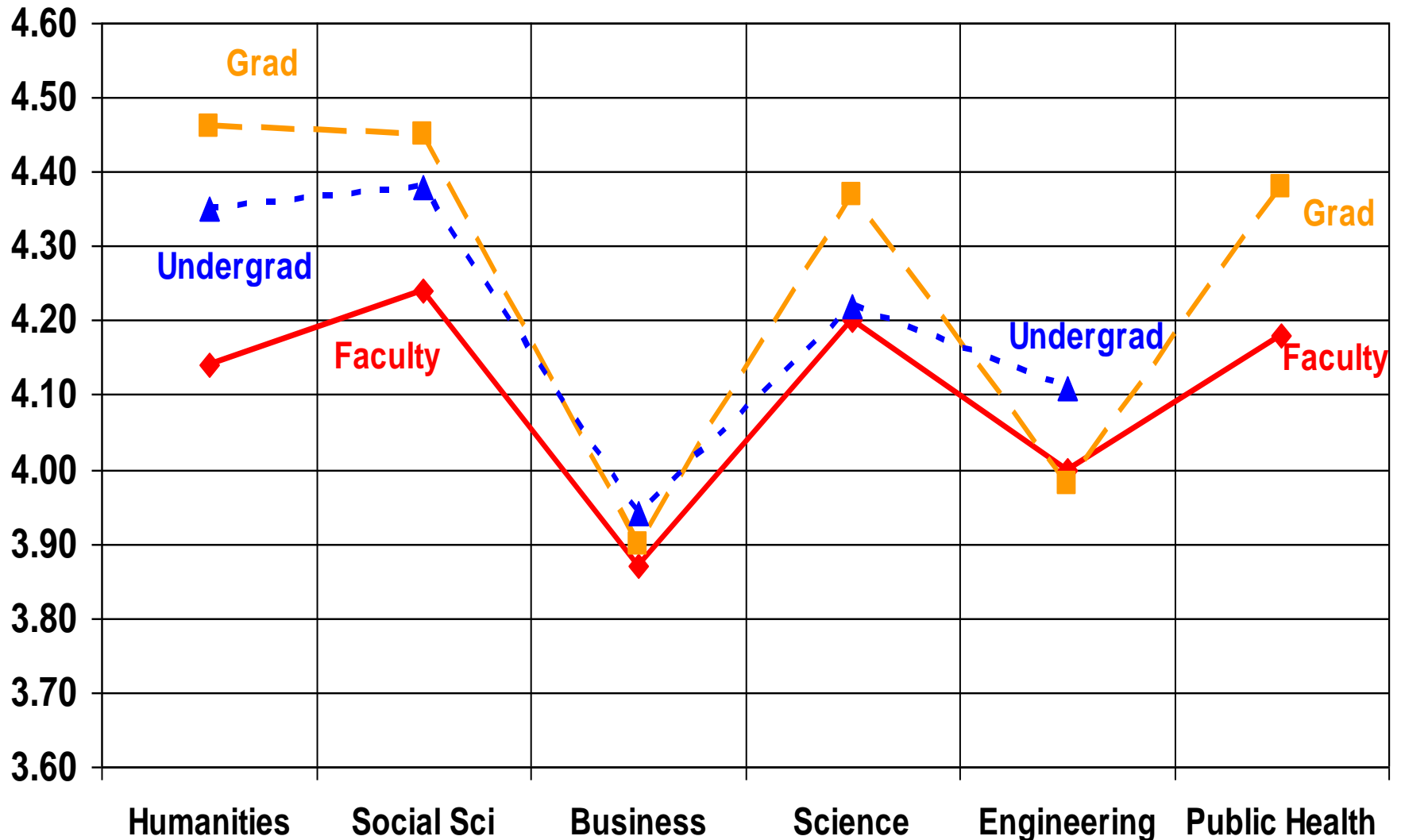
# 2004 Resource Type Importance

## Faculty By Selected Colleges



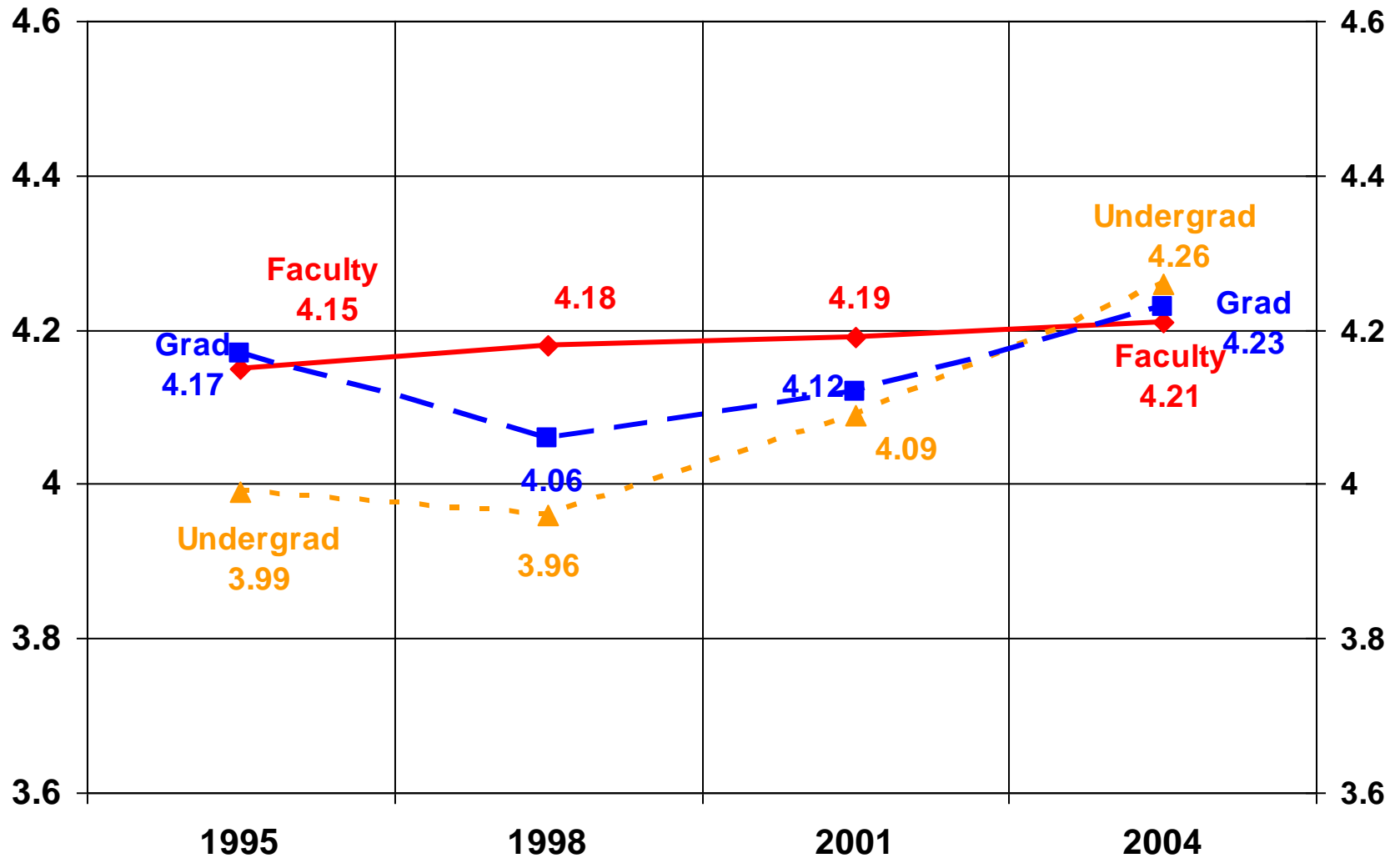
# 2004 Overall Collections Satisfaction

## 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

# 2004 Grad Student Priorities & % in Doctoral Programs by Selected Colleges

