

# **Measure by Measure: Assessing the Viability of the Physical Library**

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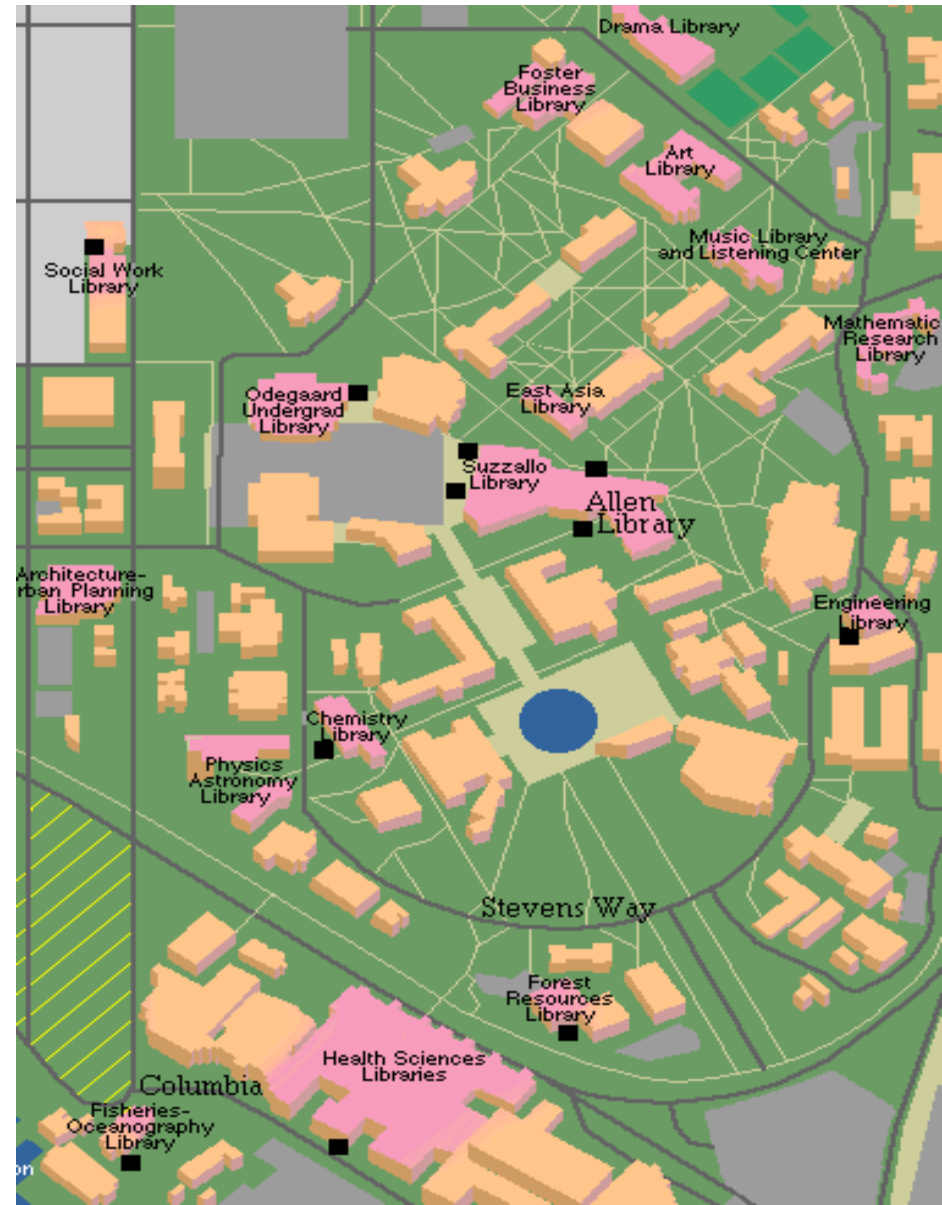
**University of Washington Libraries**

**Seattle, WA USA**

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Measurement in Libraries**

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# University of Washington, Seattle USA



# Academic Branch Libraries

- **Definition:**

A library service unit **under the management of the library administration**, with collections and staff, which is physically separate or divided from other library service units

*ACRL Guidelines for Branch Libraries in Colleges and Universities 1990*

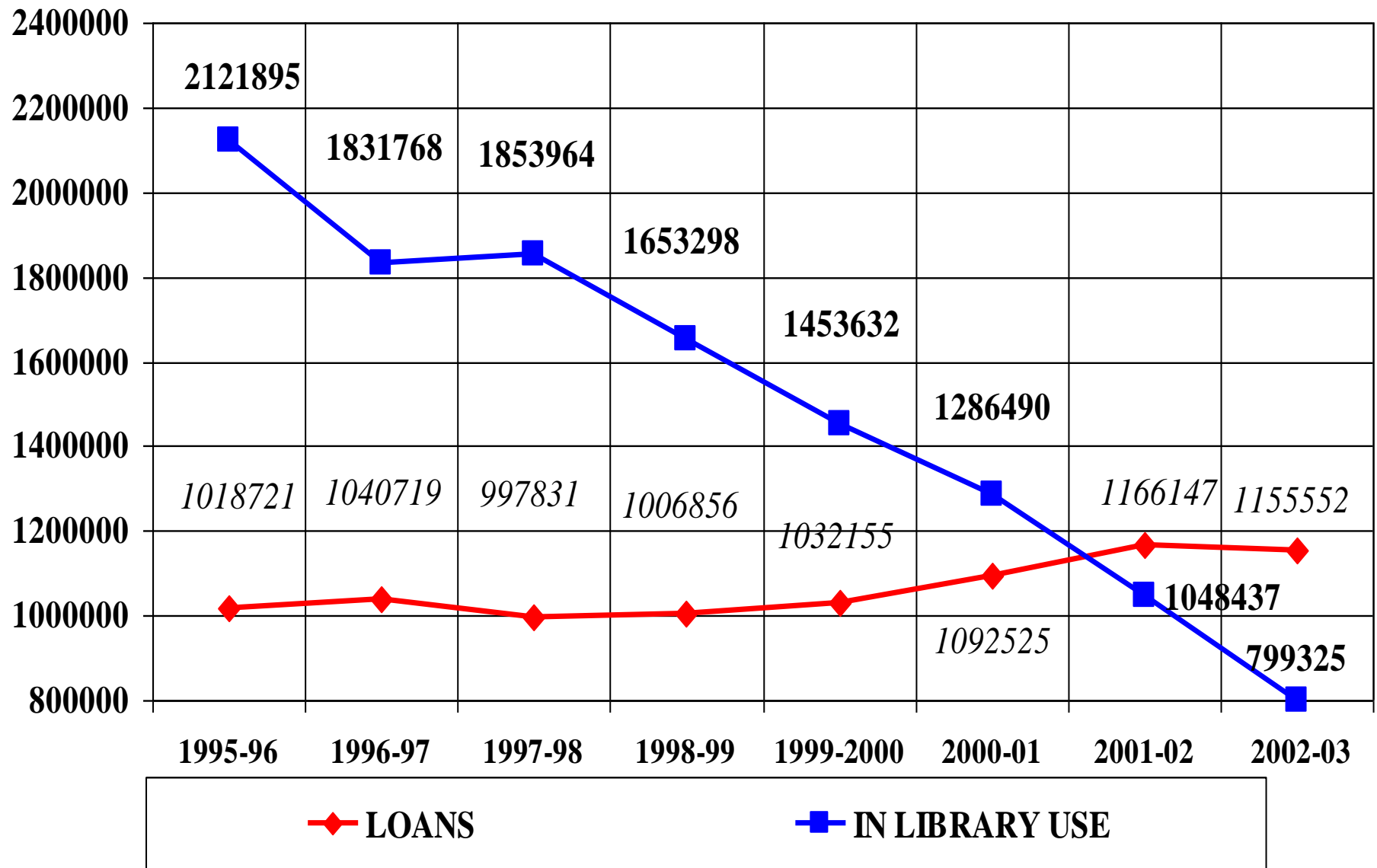
- **Attributes:**

- Many evolved from departmental reading rooms
- Often associated with large research universities
- Most common in sciences, fine arts, business, engineering, and health sciences
- Traditionally able to offer more specialized and personalized services

# **North American Academic Branch Libraries: Recent Trends**

- **Declining use**, especially with the advent of full-text electronic resources
- **Multidisciplinary research** and learning is on the increase; traditional disciplinary boundaries blurring
- **Facilities need upgrading**; few new academic branch libraries built or substantially renovated
- **New library service models** emerging that emphasize local support delivery rather than local collections
- **University budgets and space stressed**
- **Closures and mergers on the increase**
- **Are (collection based) academic branch libraries still viable and how can we measure that viability?**

# Print Use Declines: UW Annual Loans and In-Library Use 1995-96 to 2002-03



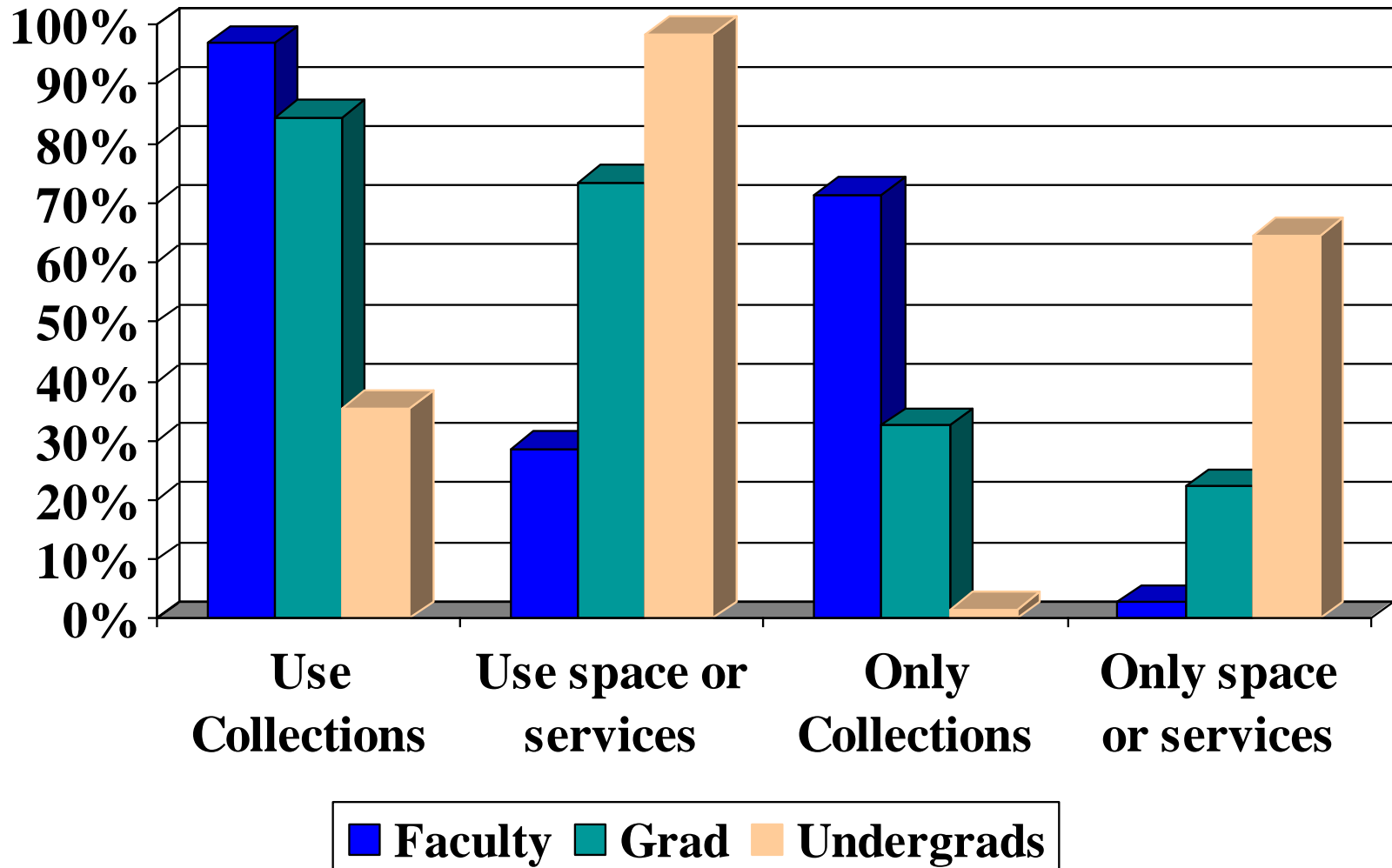
# UW In-Person Visits Declined and Remote Use Increased 1998/2001

(% who use library at least weekly)

	<b>Visit 1998</b>	<b>Visit 2001</b>	<b>Remote 1998</b>	<b>Remote 2001</b>
<b>Faculty Change</b>	47%	40% -15%	73%	79% +8%
<b>Grad Change</b>	78%	59% -24%	63%	75% +19%
<b>Undergrad Change</b>	67%	61% -9%	43%	54% +26%

# Reasons for Visiting Libraries 2001: UW

## Faculty and Students (Among those visiting at least weekly)



# **Branch Libraries Closure Criteria: North American Academic Libraries**

- **Recent North American closures/mergers driven by:**
  - Budget reductions
  - Space needed by academic departments
  - Desktop delivery of information resources and services
  - New service models that focus on people not collections
- **University of Washington measures (1994-95)**
  - Distance from main library
  - Size of primary user community
  - Degree of multi-library use by primary user community

*ARL Spec Kit 255, Branch Libraries and Discrete Collections, 1999*



# Branch Libraries Closure Criteria: Public Libraries

- **U.K. (after Sheffield University )**
  - Book issue totals and trends
  - Book issues per hour open
  - Net cost per book issue
  - Total visitors per week
  - Visitors per hour open
  - Population/population trends of the local catchment areas
  - Distance to nearest library and to District/Central Library
  - Public transport availability
  - Social value and impact

*Sheffield University Centre for the Public Library and  
Information in Society*

# **Performance Measurement Criteria to Assess 10 UW Branch Libraries**

- **Develop a “basket” of viability measures**
  - Measures that relate to the library’s physical presence and location
  - Measures that are balanced
  - Measures that use available data or data that can be easily obtained
  - Measures that can be clearly presented and understood
  - Measures that incorporate trend data as appropriate
- **Viability measures that can provide a “road map” for long term strategy of merger and consolidation . . .**
  - Mergers based on “objective” criteria rather than political or budgetary considerations
  - Measures that enable the library to have more control over the process
- **And identify those libraries where we could invest in facility upgrades for the short to mid term**

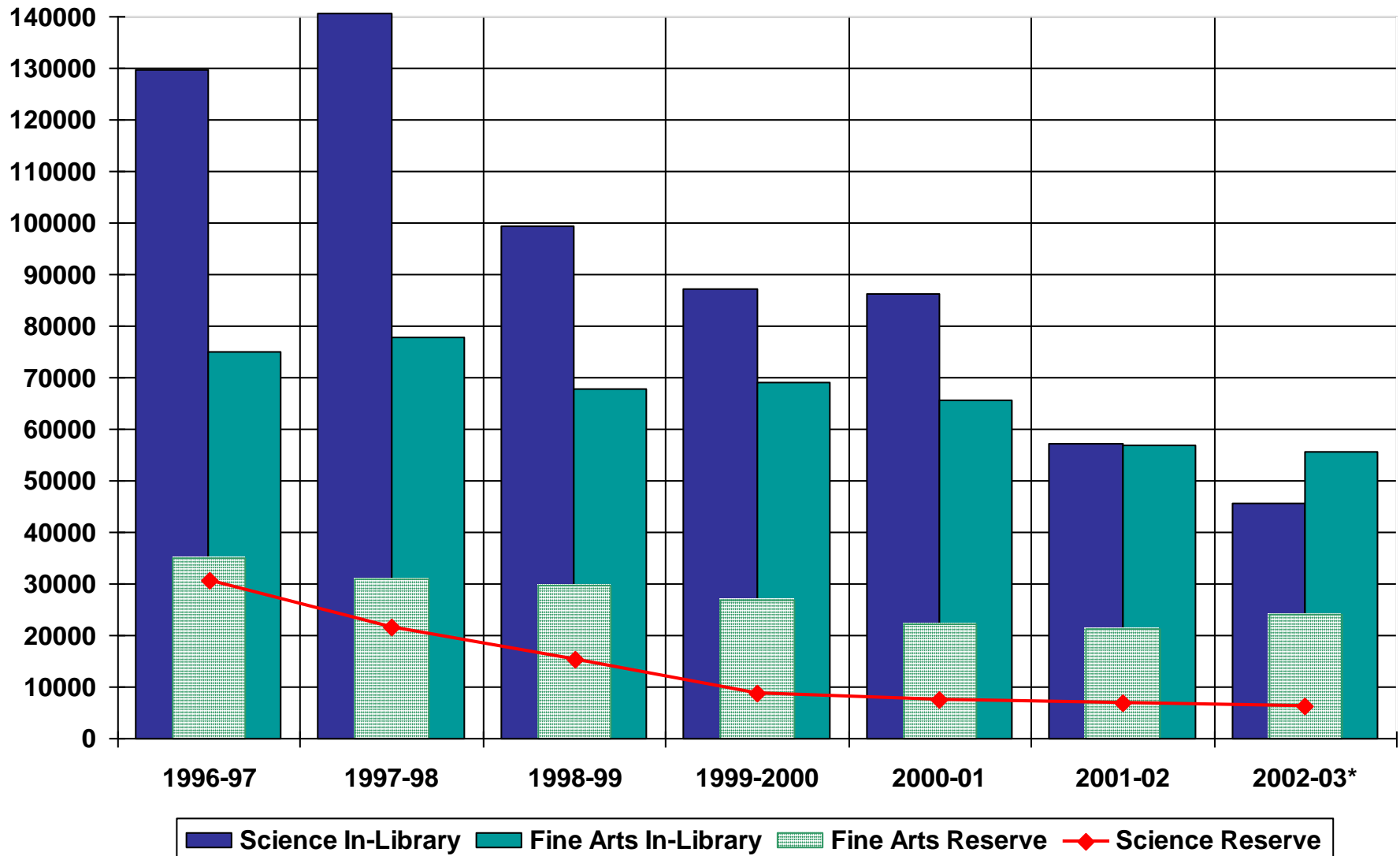
# UW Branch Library Viability Measures

- Measures developed in 4 broad categories:
- Use
- Primary user population
- Facility quality
- Library dependency of primary user community
- Caveats:
- Compared branch libraries with each other, not against any standard
- Didn't use as initial measures:
  - Operational costs
  - Collection size (unless >100,000 volumes)
  - Facility size
  - Distance from main library

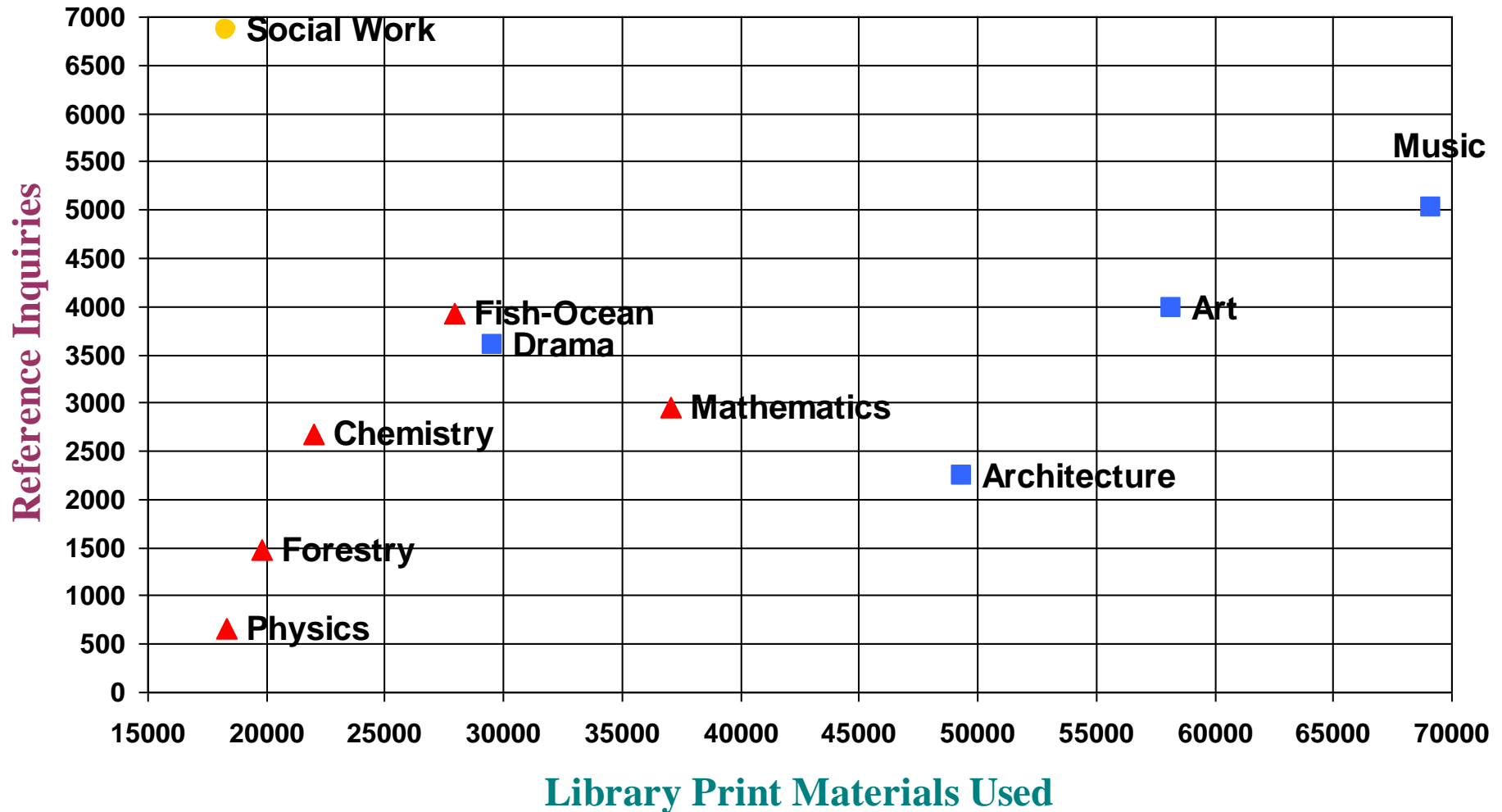
# Library Use Measures

- **Print materials use (latest year)**
  - Includes loans, in-library use, and print reserves
- **Print materials use change 1995-97 to latest 2 year period**
  - Includes loans, in-library use and print reserves
- **Photocopies/prints made (latest year)**
  - Sheets copied on library photocopiers and sheets printed on library printers (cost to user for both)
- **Reference inquiries (latest year)**
  - Number of non-directional inquiries
- **Entrance gate count (latest year)**

# In-Library and Reserve Use: Science and Fine Arts Branch Libraries 1996-97 to 2002-03

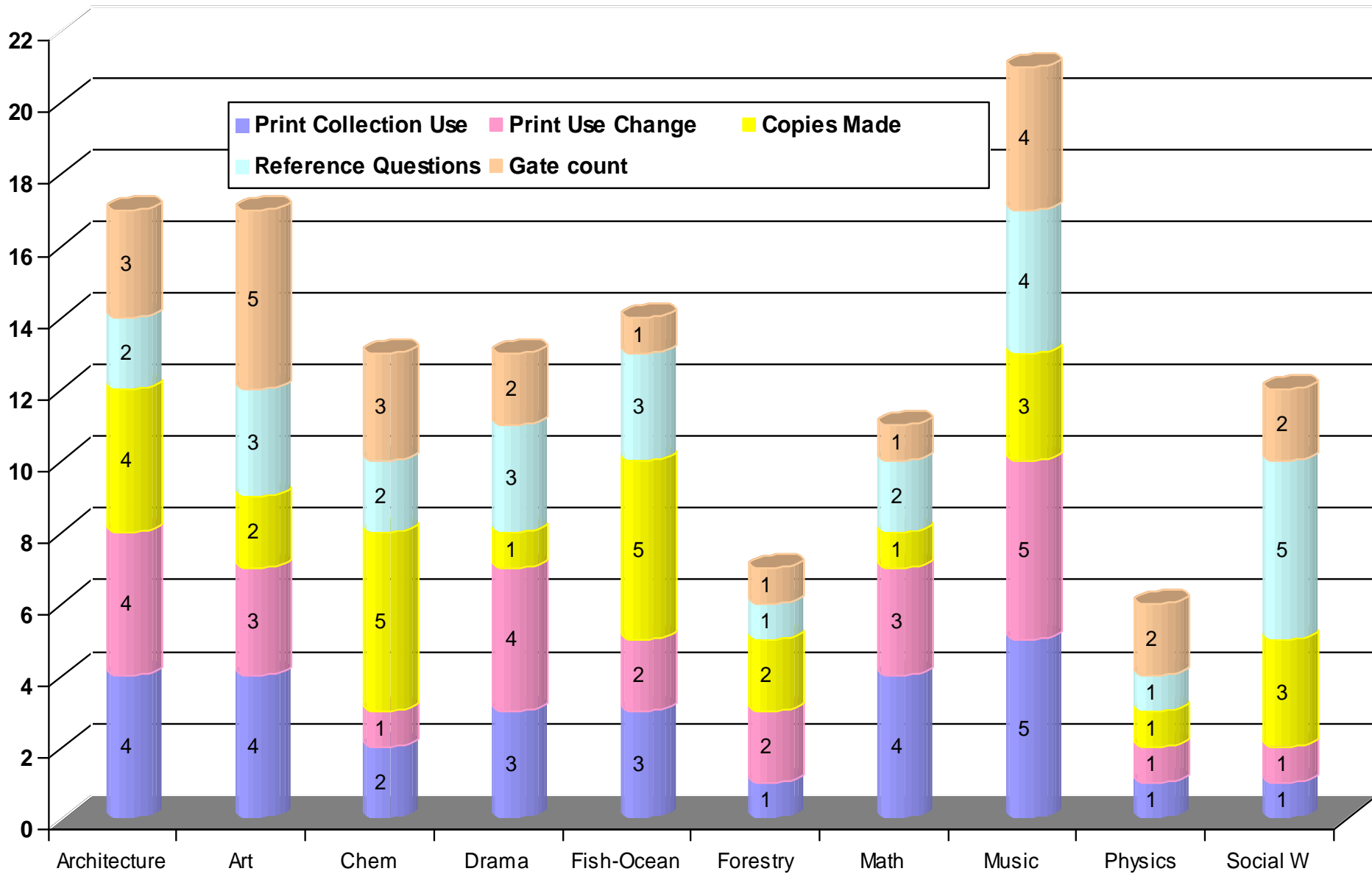


# Print Collection Use and Reference Inquiries for 10 Branch Libraries 2002-03



# Use Scores

Values Assigned to each measure ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest)



# **User Population Measures**

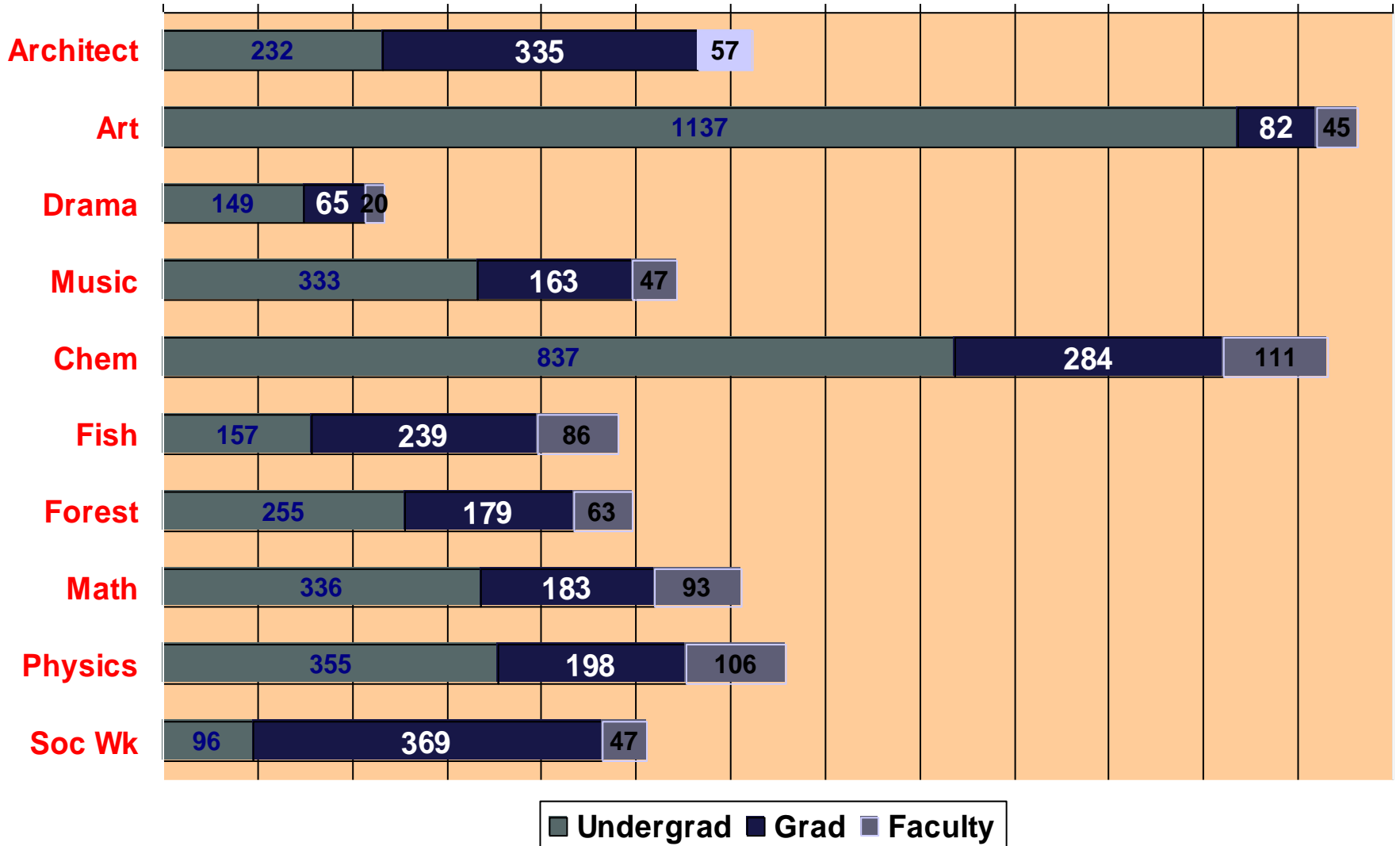
## **Branch Library Primary User Groups**

- **Undergraduate majors (latest year)**
- **Undergraduate majors enrollment changes 1995-97 to latest two year period (2001-03)**
- **Graduate students (latest year)**
- **Graduate students changes between 1995-97 and latest two year period (2001-03)**
- **Number of faculty (latest year)**

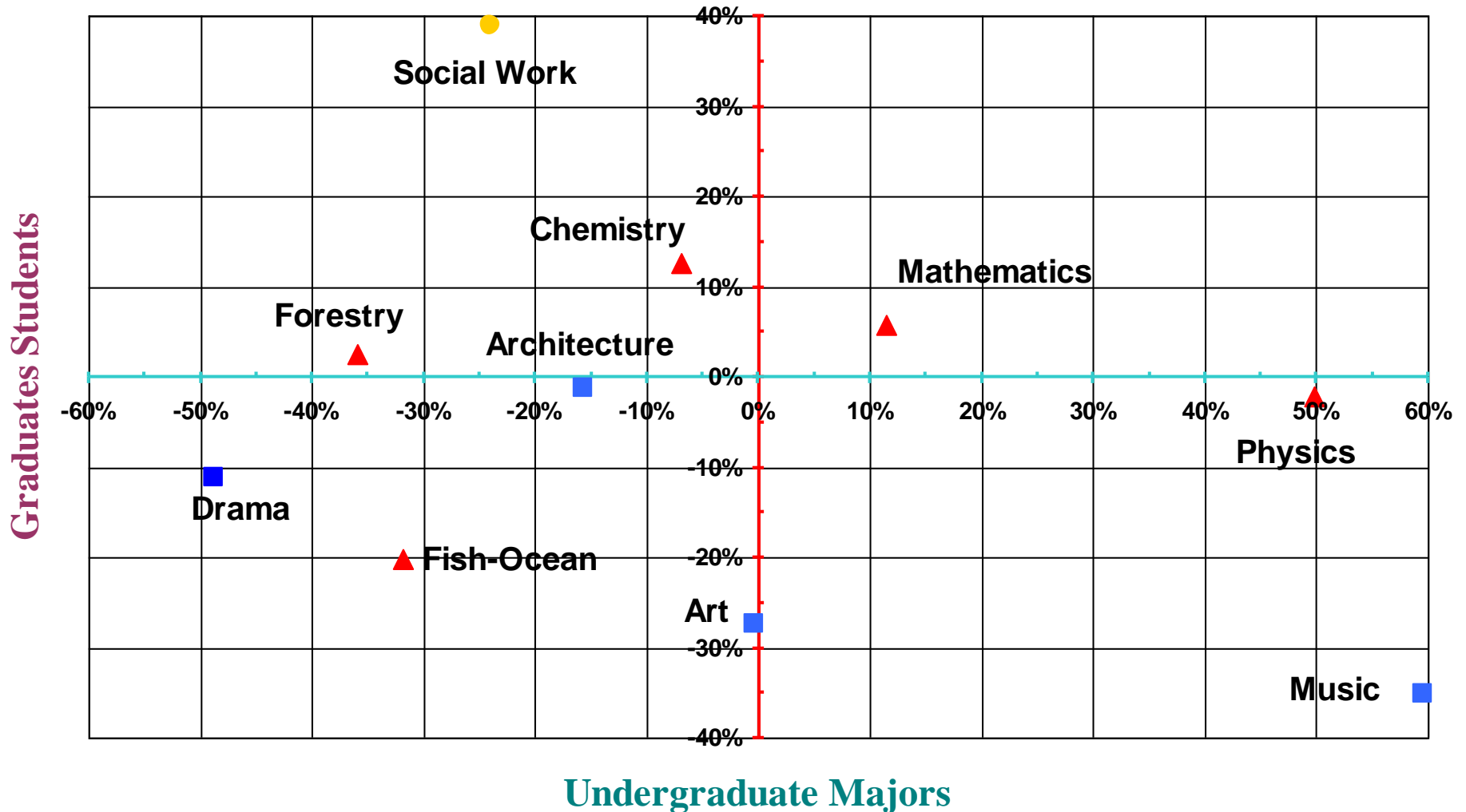


# Primary User Groups by Branch Library

0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000 1100 1200 1300



# Student Enrollment Change 1995-97 to 2001-03 by Branch Library



# Facility Quality Measures:

## Libraries Are Student Spaces

- **Students per user seat**
  - Number students from primary academic area per general user seat
- **Students per computer seat**
  - Number of students from primary academic area per library computer
- **Quality of user space**
- **Quality of collection space**
- **Quality of staff space**

# Facility Space Quality: Methodology

- Discussed facility issues with unit staff
- Reviewed user survey comments from 2001 and 2002
- Developed list of criteria
- A team of 3 walked through each unit
- A second walk through was conducted 2 months later
- Each member of the team assigned a score of 1 to 5 for quality of staff, collections, and user spaces.
- Scores were compared and made consistent.

# Facility Quality: Key Attributes

- **Staff spaces**
  - Privacy
  - Light and noise levels conducive to work
  - Furnishings and equipment
  - Staff area separated from public area
- **Collection spaces**
  - Growth potential
  - Theft detection system
  - Collection arranged in a user friendly manner
  - Environmental conditions suitable for preservation
- **User Spaces**
  - Diversified and sufficient user space
  - Light and noise levels conducive to work
  - ADA compliant
  - Furniture and equipment
  - Ambience and amenities

# **Library Dependency Measures:**

## **Tied to Use of On-Site Print Collections**

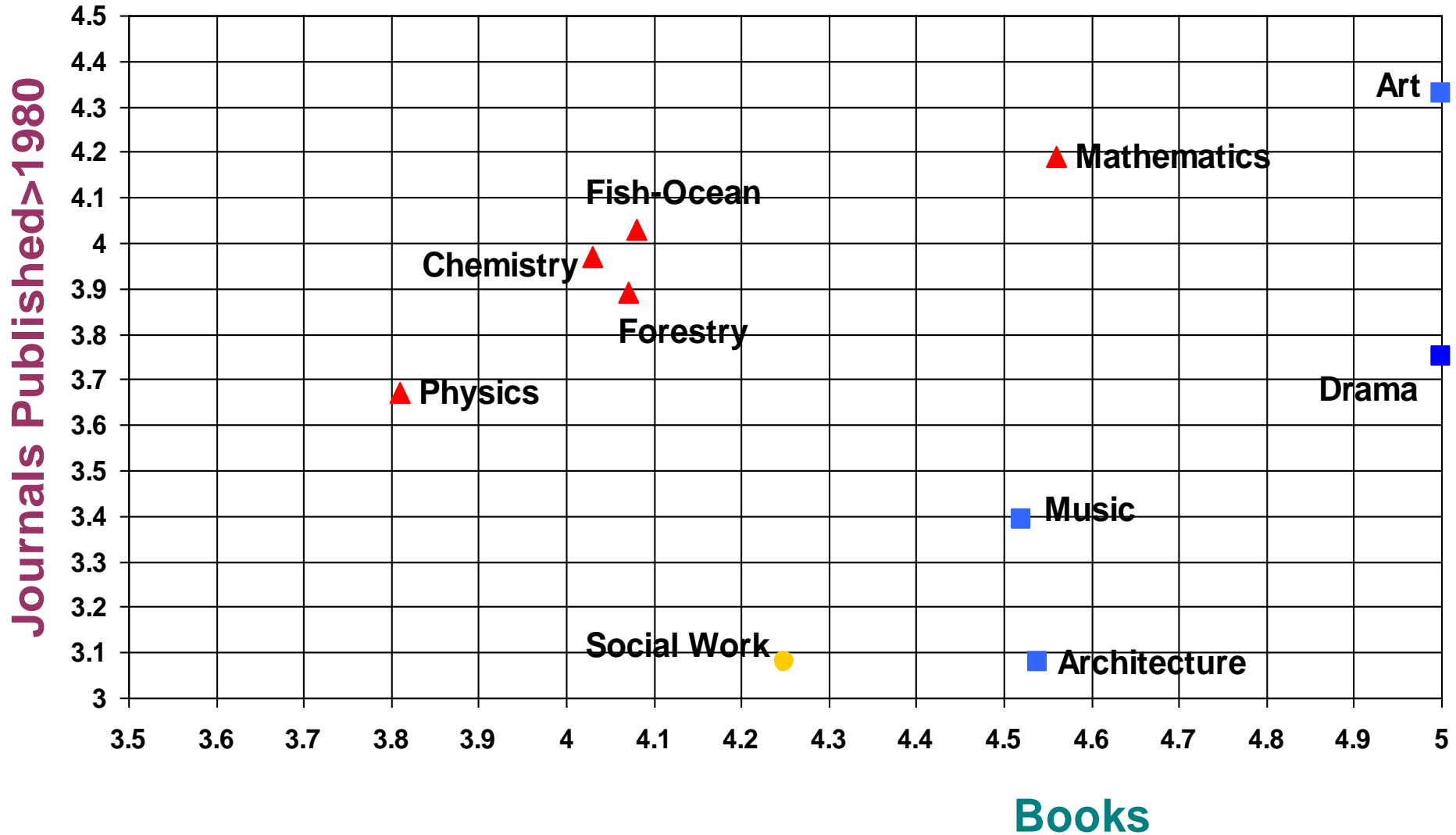
- **Percentage who visit library to use collections**
- **Frequency of faculty in-person library visits**
- **Ratio of faculty use of primary library to main library**
- **Importance of certain print collections to faculty**
  - **Books**
  - **Journals published before 1980**
    - Percentage of core journals currently available electronically

# **Primary User Community Dependency on Physical Library: Sources**

- **In-Library Survey Spring 2002**
  - Distributed short survey that asked about their library visit
  - Survey distributed during five 2 hour time blocks
  - 4000 completed surveys returned
- **Library Triennial Survey 2001**
  - Survey sent to all faculty and a sample of students
  - Survey asked about library use patterns, importance of books and journals, priorities
  - 1345 faculty surveys returned (36% response rate); 600 graduate student surveys returned (40% response rate)
- **ISI Journal Citation Reports**
  - Develop list of highly cited journals by subject and then check for electronic availability

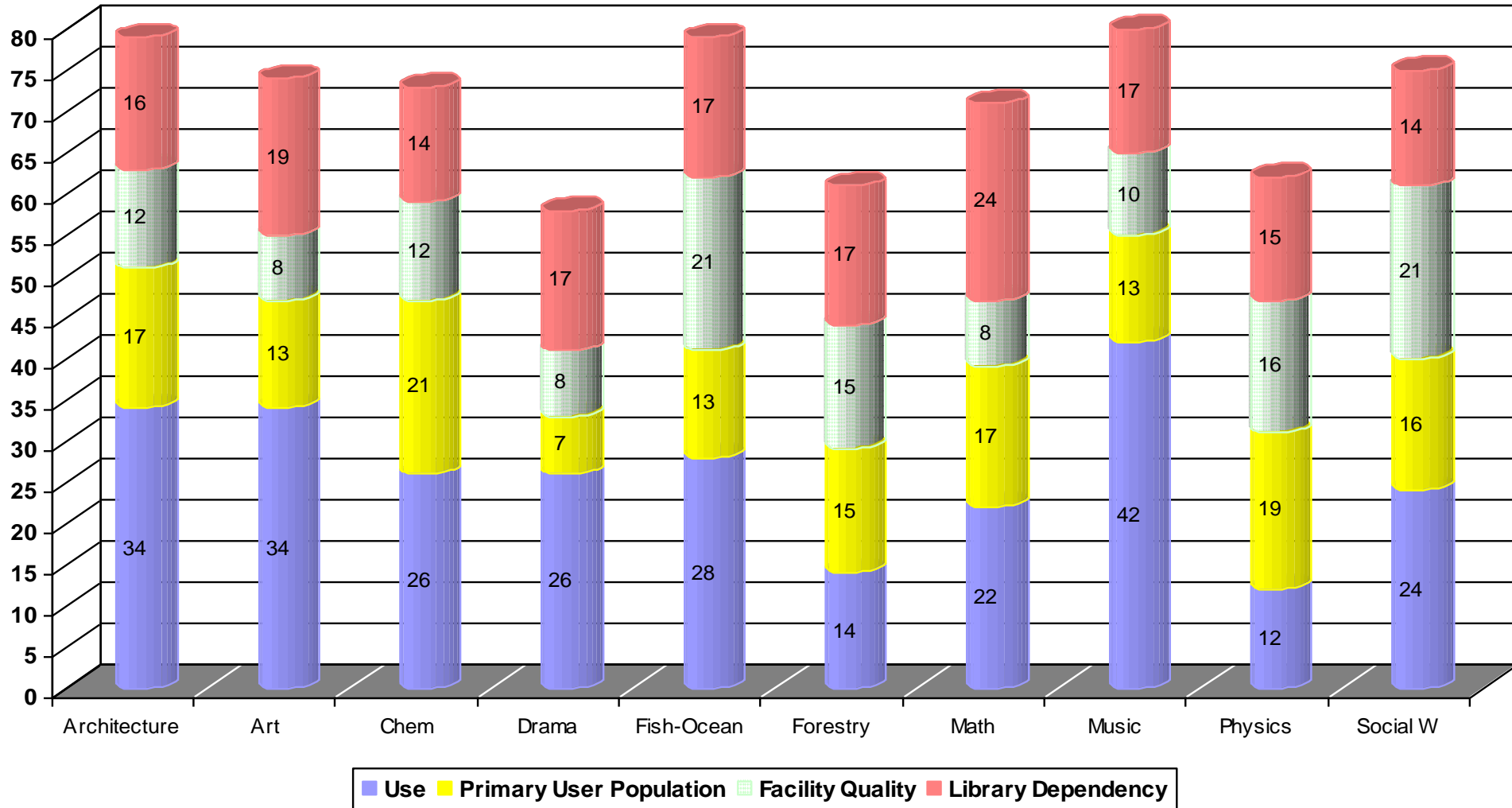
# Importance of Books and Older Journals by Faculty

## Primary User Group (Scale of 1-not important- to 5-very important-)





# Branch Library Viability Measures Score (Use weighted 2x)



# What's Next at UW?

- Report and recommendations on merging 4 libraries during next 2 years accepted by library administration
  - 1<sup>st</sup> merger into main library anticipated December 2003
  - Merger of 2 science libraries possible in 2004-2005 year
  - Potential merger of a fine arts library into main library
- Developing and implementing **new service models** where the Libraries can maintain a presence (but not house print collections) in the academic unit

# **Future Viability of Branch Libraries**

- Use measures will continue to decline
- Branch library closures and mergers will accelerate in those subject areas with substantial electronic resources available and in libraries with stressed budgets
- New service models will evolve for providing library service and support within the space of the academic unit
- Surviving physical libraries will emphasize student work and support space in collaborative teaching and learning environments

# The Future of Branch Libraries?

(From *The Simpsons*, after robots run amok at Itchy and Scratchy Land)



**Professor Frink:** **Man, if this is happening here, I'd hate to think of what's happening in Euro Itchy and Scratchy Land.**

*[shot of empty parking lot in said park]*

**Booth man:** *[French accent]* **Hello? Itchy and Scratchy Land open for business. Who are you to resist it, huh?**

**Come on. My last paycheck bounced. My children need wine.**