

Demonstrating Our Value: Practical Approaches to Effective Library Assessment

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Workshop Goal

After this session you'll agree that:



**Free Speech Wall in Charlottesville, VA
Site of 2006 Library Assessment Conference**

What Makes a Good Library?

- Library “Goodness” **traditionally** defined internally:
 - Quality (Bigger was better!)
 - Access and availability
 - Effectiveness
 - Efficiency
 - Economy
 - Equity
- **Now focus on : How much good does this library do?**
 - Impact and outcomes for customers
 - Value to customers and stakeholders

Traditional Measures of Library Goodness

- **Library Statistics reported to . . .**
 - Revenues and expenditures
 - Community size/registered borrowers
 - Staff size and salaries
 - Collections/holdings
 - Circulation and other collections usage
 - Interlibrary borrowing/lending
 - Instruction sessions
 - Library programs (# programs, attendance)
 - Library service measures (hours, patron count, ref stats)
 - Computer use detail
 - Web site usage
- **However, these don't tell us the value to the user**

Traditional Library Core Business

- **Physical Collections**
 - Print (primarily)
 - Microforms
 - Other
- **Facilities**
 - House collections
 - Customer service & work space
 - Staff work space
- **Services**
 - Reference
 - Instruction
 - Access

UW Libraries Traditional Measures

Items Used In-Library

2.12 million in 1995-96

0.36 million in 2006-07

Weekly Visits 1998 to 2007

Faculty	47%	21%
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Grad student	78%	46%
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Undergrad	67%	66%
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In-Person Reference

142,000 in 2002-03

93,000 in 2006-07

The Challenge for Libraries

- Traditional statistics don't define the 21st Century Library
 - Emphasize inputs, expenditures, acquisitions, holdings – how big and how much
 - Can no longer tell the library's story
 - May not be aligned with library/organizational goals and plans
 - Don't define and measure service quality
- Need metrics describing outcomes: success and value from the user's perspective
- The organizational culture and structure, tools, and skill set needed for libraries to acquire this information

What difference do we make to our communities?

Why Assess?

- Accountability and justification
- Measure progress/achievement
- Improvement of services
- Comparison with others
- Identify changing use and needs patterns
 - Remote/In-person
 - Relevancy of current services and resources
 - New services
- Marketing and promotion
- Decisions based on data, not assumptions
 - **Assumicide!**

Time for a New Business Model?

Not just better libraries . . .

Not better customers . . . but

*Demonstrate the Value the Library Provides
the University Community*

“Documenting the libraries contributions to quality teaching, student outcomes, and research productivity will become critical.”

(Yvonna Lincoln 2006)

Customer-Centered Library and the Culture of Assessment

Customer-Centered Library

- All services and activities are viewed through the eyes of the customers
- Customers determine quality
- Library services and resources add value to the customer

Culture of Assessment

- Organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis,
- Services are planned and delivered to maximize positive customer outcomes

It's not about us! It's about the customer.

The Role of Library Assessment

Library assessment provides a structured process to learn about our communities, their work and the libraries connection to what they do

The information acquired through library assessment is used in an iterative manner to improve library programs and services and make our libraries responsive to the needs of our communities.

Libraries do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a larger organization and community. Assessment may take place at the library level as well as at the broader community level.

Thinking Strategically About Library Futures: Some Assessment-Related Questions

- What is the central work of the library and how can we do more, differently, and at less cost?
- What important services does the library provide that others can't?
- What advantages does the research library possess?
- How is customer behavior changing?
- How do we add value to our customers work?
- What are the essential factors responsible for library success now and in the future?

What Do We Need to Know About Our Customers?

- Who are our customers (and potential customers)?
- What are their teaching, learning, and research interests?
- How do they work? What's important to them?
- How do they find information needed for their work?
- How do they use library services? What would they change?
- How do they differ from each other in library use/needs?

How does the library add value to their work?

How does the library contribute to their success?

The Value of Community Assessment

- Know actual and potential customers
- Understand needs and use preferences
- Use funding and staff effectively
- Understand and address “competition”
- Community involvement and “ownership”
- Marketing, market penetration and outreach
- Customer-centering
- Measure, demonstrate, present the value of the library to the community

“Library” Users in the Networked World

(Adapted from Peter Brophy)

- **Personal search** replaces ‘ask a librarian’
- **Global search** of the global library
 - Google, flickr, del.icio.us; PubMed; Google Scholar
 - If there’s no response in 3 seconds, try elsewhere
 - *Then: Resources scarce, attention abundant*
 - *Now: Attention scarce, resources abundant*
- Social networking/communication - wikis, blogs
- Where’s the text? Discovery to Delivery is one action.
- **Satisficing**
 - *Then: what is the best source of authoritative information?*
 - *Now: which is the most readily accessible source of adequate information?*
- Those network tools used are embedded in workflow

So Understanding Users is Critical

- ‘Users need library services which are embedded in their:
 - Workflows
 - Learnflows
 - Leisureflows
 - Lifeflows
 - Engage with the users’ languages and their processes of learning, research, leisure and ... life
 - Learn what’s important to them
 - Because they may not come to you
- Support learning, research and life where they occur – and surface that support within the users lifeflows

How Do We Get Customer Information?

- Surveys
- Usage statistics
- Focus groups
- Observation
- Usability
- Interviews
- *Embedding*
- Data mining (local, institutional)
- Logged activities

If It Was Only This Easy!



Donning his new canine decoder, Professor Schwartzman becomes the first human being on Earth to hear what barking dogs are actually saying.

What Will We Measure?

“What is easy to measure is not necessarily what is desirable to measure. It is always tempting to set goals based on the data that are gathered, rather than developing a data-gathering system linked to assessing progress towards meeting established goals.”




M. Kryllidou, “An overview of performance measures in higher education and libraries”, 1998

IFLA Measuring Quality Performance Measurement in Libraries

Some examples (ISO 11620 compliant)

- Resources, infrastructure
 - Per capita: user area, seats, expenditures, staff
- Use
 - User satisfaction; collection use; reference questions
- Efficiency
 - Cost per user, visit, use, download ; processing speed
- Potentials and Development
 - % of acq. budget spent electronically, library staff providing and developing electronic services

Assessment at Association of Research Libraries

- A gateway to assessment tools: StatsQUAL[®]:
 -  ARL Statistics -- E-Metrics
 -  LibQUAL+[®]
 -  DigiQUAL[®]
 - MINES for Libraries[®]
- Library Assessment Conferences
- Service Quality Evaluation Academy
- Library Assessment Blog
- Making Library Assessment Work
- ESP Assessment
 - Effective, Sustainable, Practical

“Making Library Assessment Work”

- ARL project approved in 2004
- Funded by participating libraries
- Site visits by Steve Hiller (UW) and Jim Self (UVa)
 - Presentation
 - Interviews and meetings
 - Report to the Library
- 24 ARL libraries in U.S. and Canada visited in 2005-06
- **Succeeded by Effective, Sustainable and Practical Library Assessment in 2007**
 - Open to all libraries
 - 6 libraries participating in 2007

What We've Found

- Strong interest in using assessment to improve customer service and demonstrate value of library
- Many libraries uncertain on how to establish, maintain, and sustain effective assessment
- Effectiveness of assessment program not dependent on library size or budget
- Each library has a unique culture and mission. No “one size fits all” approach works.
- Strong customer-focus and leadership support are keys to developing effective and sustainable assessment

What Are We Measuring?

Reviewing the ARL Statistics

October 2005, ARL Board approved a study to:

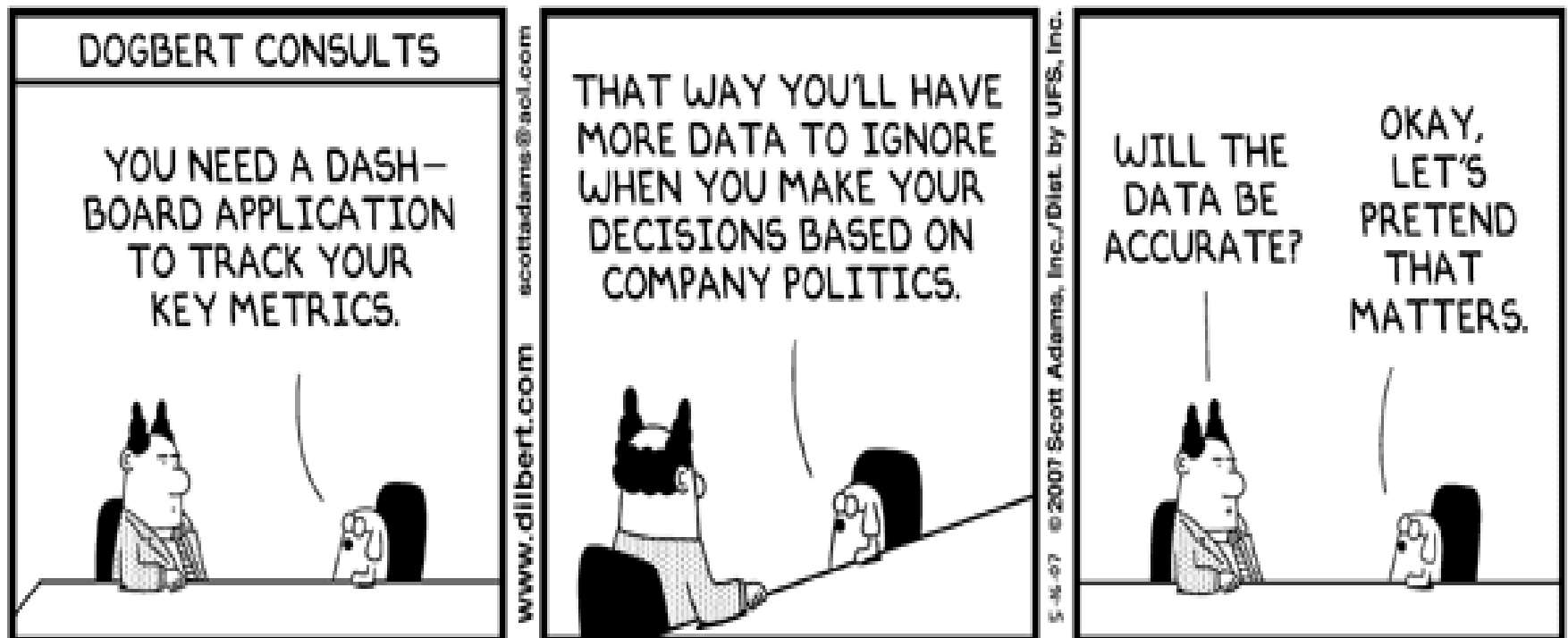
- Determine if there are new ways of describing research library collections.
 - What is it we are currently measuring?
 - Are they the right data?
 - Develop alternative models?
- Develop a profile of the characteristics of a contemporary research library
- Determine/develop new meaningful measures to augment current ones to support this profile

Qualitative Profile: New Ways of Evaluating Library Effectiveness

- Uniqueness of collections
- Defining the value of consortia
- Administrative and budgetary efficiencies
- Student outcomes/student learning/graduate success
- Contributions to faculty productivity
- Social frameworks/intellectual networks
- Generating new knowledge
- Creating the collective good with reusable assets

(Per Yvonna Lincoln for ARL)

A More Skeptical View of Metrics

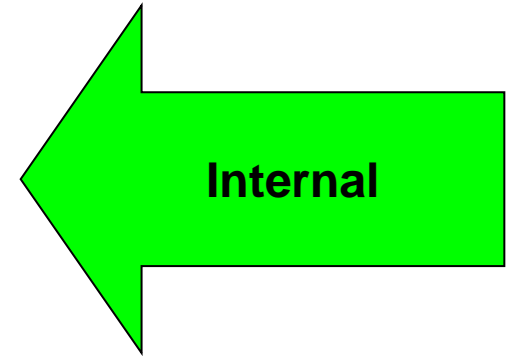


Which Services Do We Assess

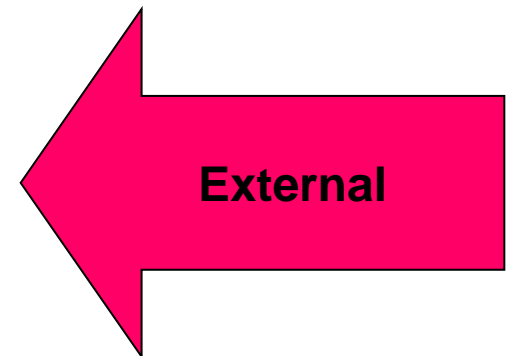
- High performing, heavily used services
 - Celebrate their success
- High performing, but underused services
 - Is marketing needed?
 - Is the service outmoded?
- Poorly performing services
 - Can they be fixed? Should they be discontinued?
- New services
- Services that are strategically important

What Kinds of Assessment Methods?

- Observation
- Conversation
- Self-reflection
- Textual analysis



- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus groups



Choosing the Assessment Method

- Define the question and need before you start?
- Is there existing information you can use?
- Is the method appropriate?
- Is it timely?
- Is it cost effective?
- What expertise is needed to conduct and analyze?
- How will the results be used?

Are you assessing what's important?

Are you assessing what's important to your community?

Use or Repurpose Existing Information

- Community/institutional data sources
- Previously collected information
- Library use data (including e-metrics)
- Acquisition requests and interlibrary loan data
- Computer/Web log data
- Comparative or trend data from other sources

User Surveys

Questions Before You Begin

- What information do you need
 - Actual or perceived
- Who do you need it from
- How will you use it
- Is a survey the best way to get it
- How soon do you need the information
- What resources are available and/or needed
- How will you analyze results

Customer Surveys: Some Caveats

- Potentially long lead time needed
 - Survey design, human subjects approval, campus coordination
- Expense (direct and indirect costs)
- Tends to measure perceptions not specific experiences
- Survey population factors
 - Sample size, representativeness, response rate, **survey fatigue**
- Expertise needed for design, analysis and interpretation
- Understanding & using results may be difficult to achieve
- Questions often asked from “our” perspective & language
- **Recognize the value of your respondent’s time**

Gresham's Law Adapted to Web Surveys

Many Bad Web Surveys Drive Down Response to All Surveys

- Logistically easier to create and use Web-based surveys
- Can construct surveys without understanding of good survey methodology
- Many web survey characterized by low response rates
- Self selection among respondents adds bias
- Increasingly difficult to generalize from respondent results to entire population (even if they are representative)

Why would I (or you) respond to a survey?

Reasons for Survey Response

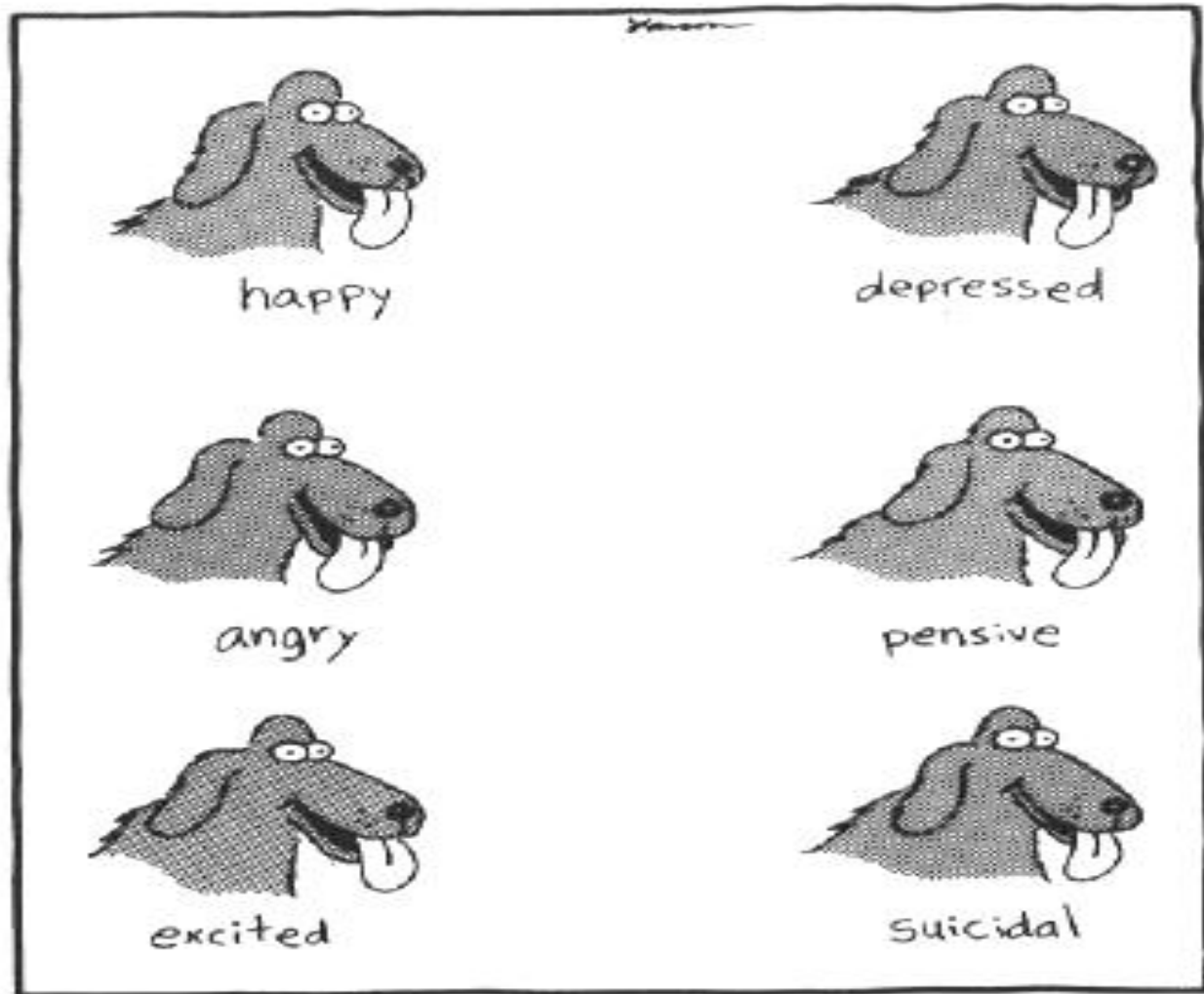
- Civic duty
- Personal connection
- Authority
- Public/social good
- Self-interest
- Reciprocation
- Incentives
- Feel strongly about . . .

User Surveys

Increasing the Response Rate

- Make survey as short as possible
- Keep it simple; avoid jargon
- Make it easy to answer and respond to
- Use pre-survey publicity
- Explain why it's important
- Offer incentives
- Do follow-up reminders

Sometimes The Data Isn't Revealing



How to recognize the moods of an Irish setter

The Qualitative Often Provides the Key

- Increasing use of such qualitative methods as, comments interviews, focus groups, usability, observation
- Statistics often can't tell us
 - Who, how, why
 - Value, impact, outcomes
- Qualitative provides information directly from users
 - Their language
 - Their issues
 - Their work
- Qualitative provides context and understanding

Qualitative Provides the “Aha” Moment

“[Access to online resources] has changed the way I do library research. It used to be a stage process: Initial trip, follow-up trip, fine-tuning trip. Now it’s a continuous interactive thing. I can follow-up anything at any time. While I’m writing I can keep going back and looking up items or verifying information.”

Graduate Student, Psychology (2002 UW Libraries focus group)

Survey Alternatives

- Focus groups
- Observations
- Usability
- Interviews
- Customer “panels”
- Data mining
- Social networking info
- Comments (solicited/unsolicited)
- Counts (manual and automated)
- Logged activities

Observational Studies

- Describe user activities in terms of:
 - what they do
 - how they do it
 - how much time they take
 - problems they encounter
- Can be obtrusive or unobtrusive
- Can be tied in with interviews or usability
- Well-developed data collection method/protocol essential
- Room counts/customer facilities use most common
- Quick and inexpensive; can use sampling

Observational Studies

Use For:

- Time sensitive
- Low-cost support
- Reality check
- Help identify/define issues (including usability)

Be Aware Of:

- Intruding on users
- Not representative
- Limited focus
- Defining data points needed
- Data collection and analysis issues

Interviews and Focus Groups

- High degree of customer involvement
- Clarify and add context to previously identified issues
- Customer defined language and issues
- Objective and effective interviewer/facilitator needed
- Analysis can be complicated complicated
- Can identify broader patterns, themes, consistency but not generalizeable to broader population
- Interview/focus group themes can be followed up with other methods

Interviews

- Becoming the method of choice for understanding user needs, work, behavior and outcomes
- Can be done efficiently and effectively
- Purpose defined; questions should be well-thought out
- Need skilled/trained interviewer
- People like to talk/tell you what they think
- Structured but flexibility to follow-up within the interview

Focus Groups

- Structured discussion to obtain user perceptions and observations on a topic
- Usually composed of 6-10 participants and may be repeated several times with different groups
- Facilitator or moderator guides discussion
- Participants encouraged to share perspectives
- Participants learn from each other

Focus Groups

- **Use For:**

- High user involvement
- Identify or clarify issues
- User defined perspective
- Focus group “bounce”
- Intermediate time/cost
- Results can lead to use of other methods

- **Be Aware Of:**

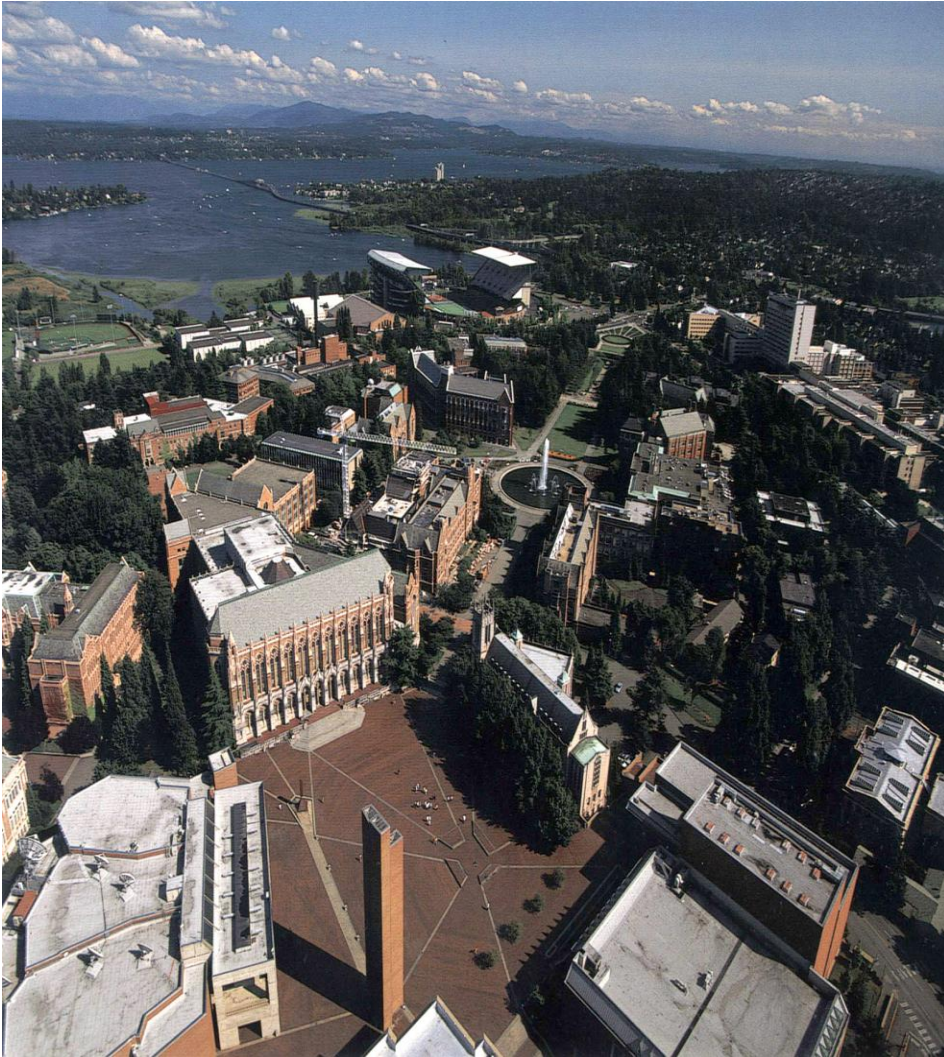
- Topic needs to be clear
- External facilitator
- Minimum # of participants
- Not representative
- Complex logistics
- Wandering discussion
- Transcription costs/time
- Complicated analysis

**It May Take More Time
Than You Think**

Usability

University of Washington

(Site of the 2008 Library Assessment Conference!)



- **Located in beautiful Seattle metro population 3.2 million**
- **Comprehensive public research university**
 - 27,000 undergraduate students
 - 12,000 graduate and professional students (80 doctoral programs)
 - 4,000 research and teaching faculty
- ***\$800 million annually in federal research funds (2nd in U.S.)***
- **Large research library system**
 - \$40 million annual budget
 - 150 librarians on 3 campuses

UW Libraries Assessment Priorities

Customer Needs, Use and Success

- Information seeking behavior and use
- Patterns of library use
- Value of library
- User needs
- Library contribution to customer success
- User satisfaction with services, collections, overall
- Data to make informed and wise decisions that lead to resources and services that contribute to user success

UW Libraries: Assessment Methods Used

- Large scale user surveys every 3 years (“triennial survey”): 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007
 - All faculty
 - Samples of undergraduate and graduate students
 - Research scientists, Health Sciences fellow/residents 2004-
- In-library use surveys every 3 years beginning 1993
- LibQUAL+™ from 2000-2003
- Focus groups/Interviews (annually since 1998)
- Observation (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability
- Use statistics/data mining

Information about assessment program available at:

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/assessment/>

UW Triennial Library Survey

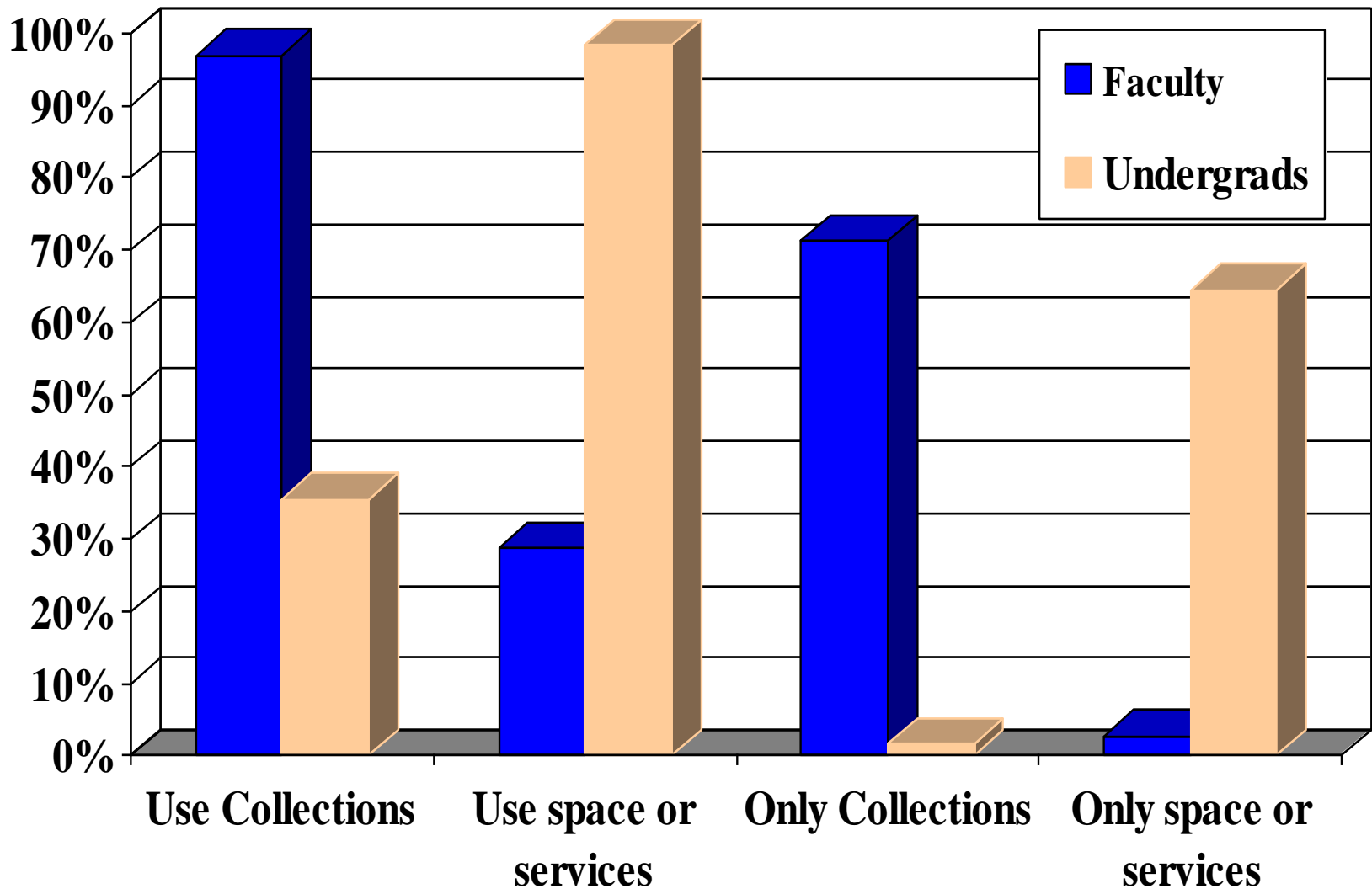
Number of Respondents and Response Rate 1992-2007

Large number of respondents allows for analysis within groups

	2007	2004	2001	1998	1995	1992
Faculty	1455 36%	1560 40%	1345 36%	1503 40%	1359 31%	1108 28%
Grad/Prof Students	580 33%	627 40%	597 40%	457 46%	409 41%	560 56%
Undergrads	467 20%	502 25%	497 25%	787 39%	463 23%	407 41%

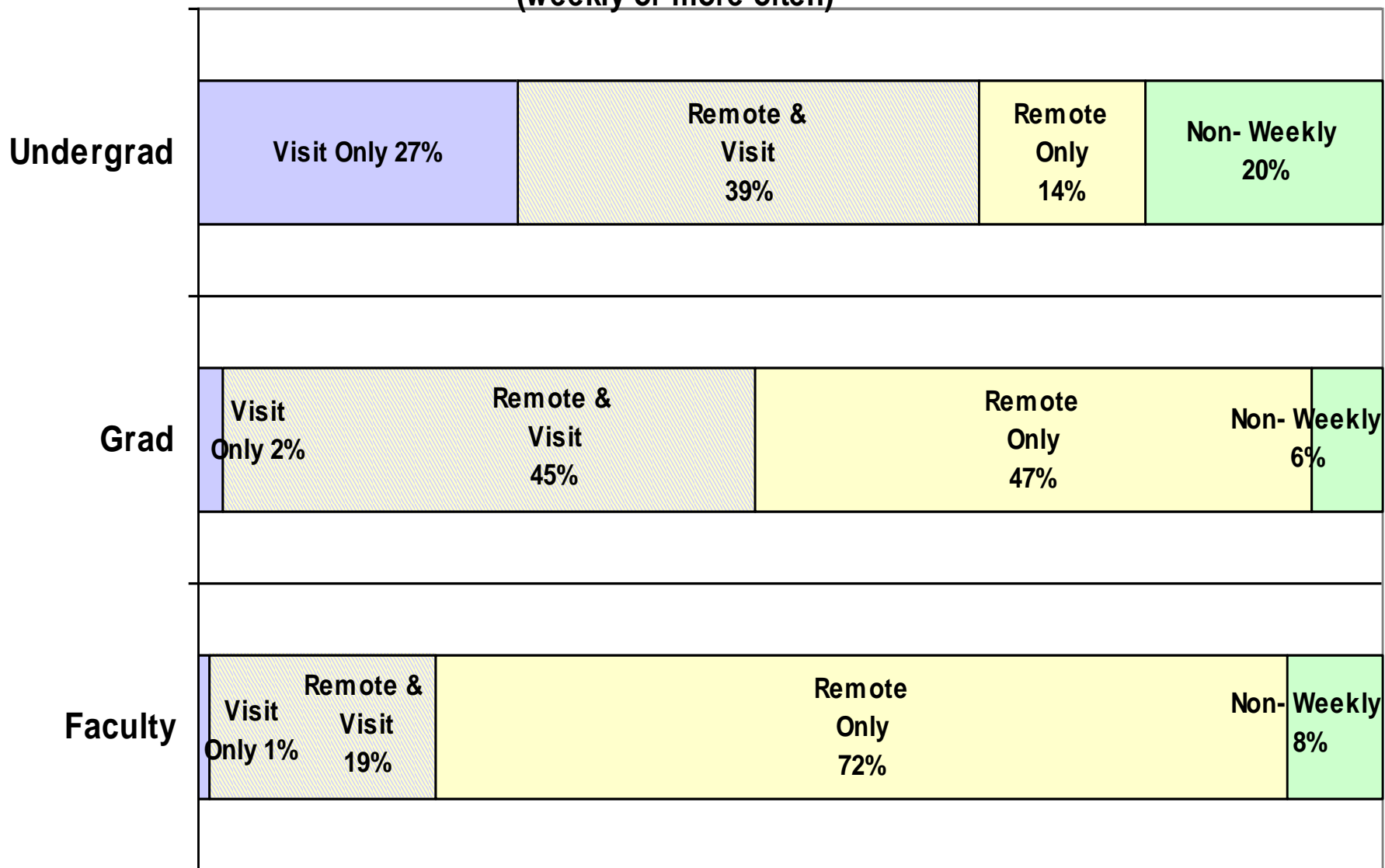
Reasons for In-Person Library Visits 2001

Faculty and Undergrads Visiting Weekly or More Often



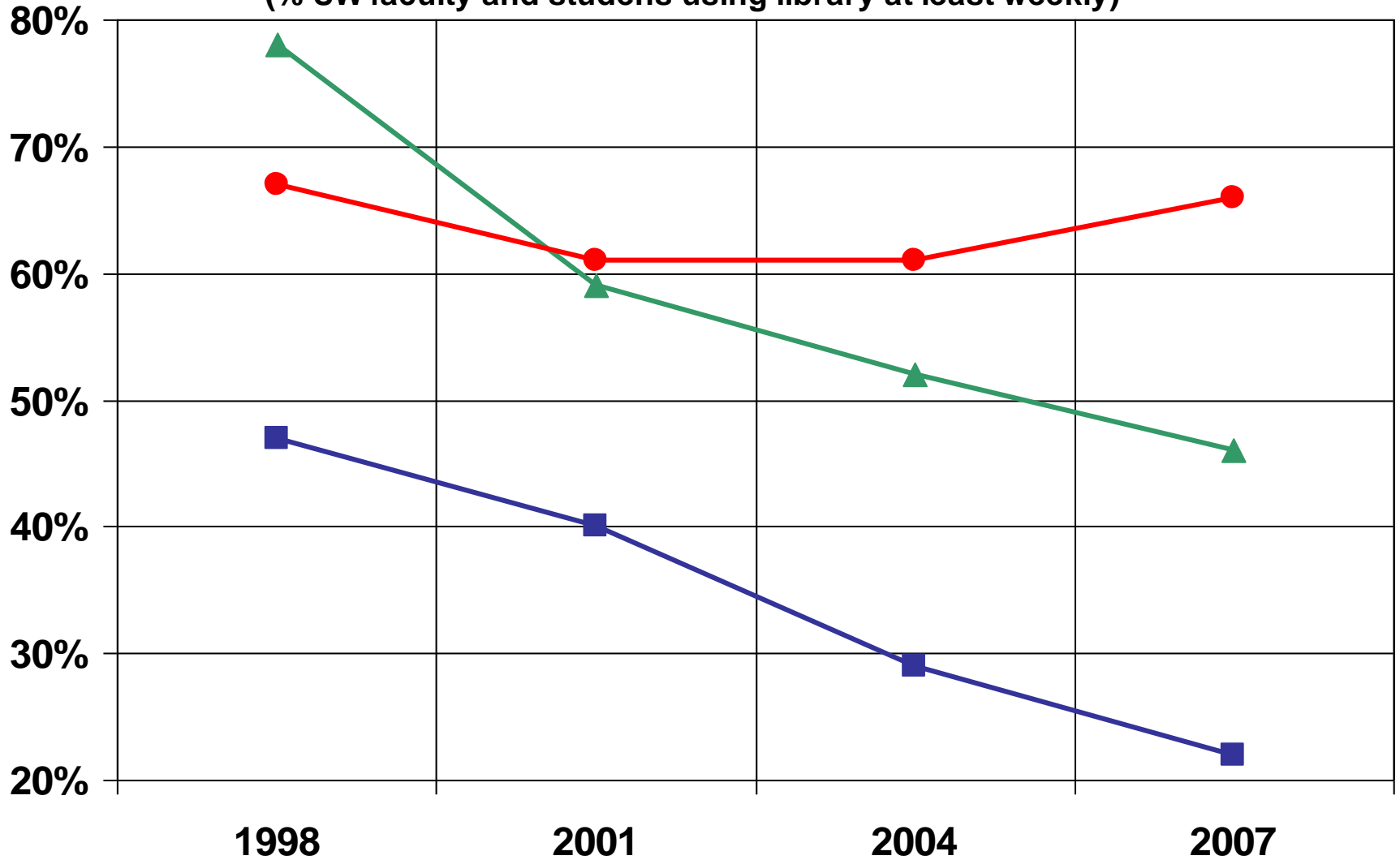
Mode of Library Use by Group 2007

(weekly or more often)



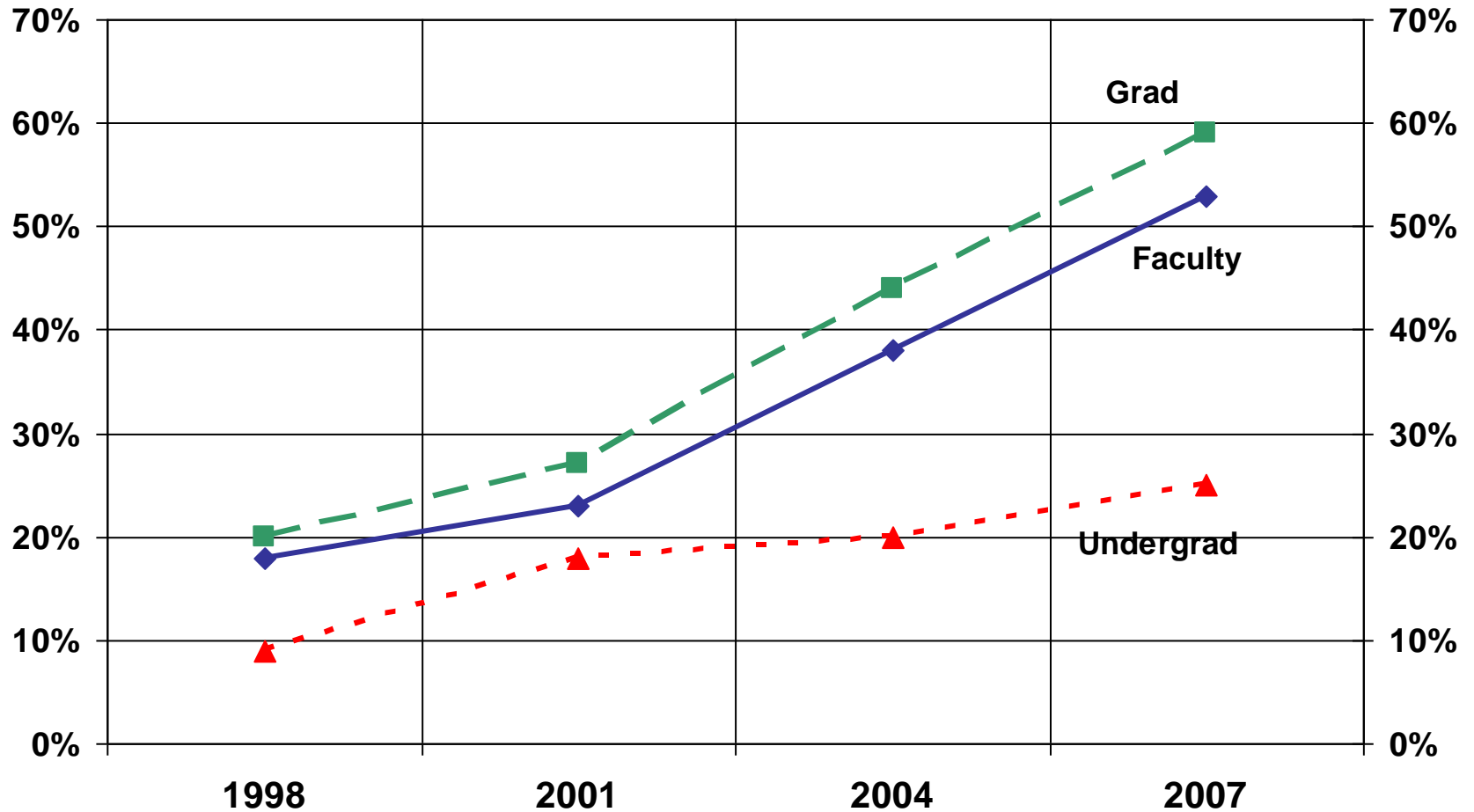
In-Person Visits 1998-2007

(% UW faculty and students using library at least weekly)



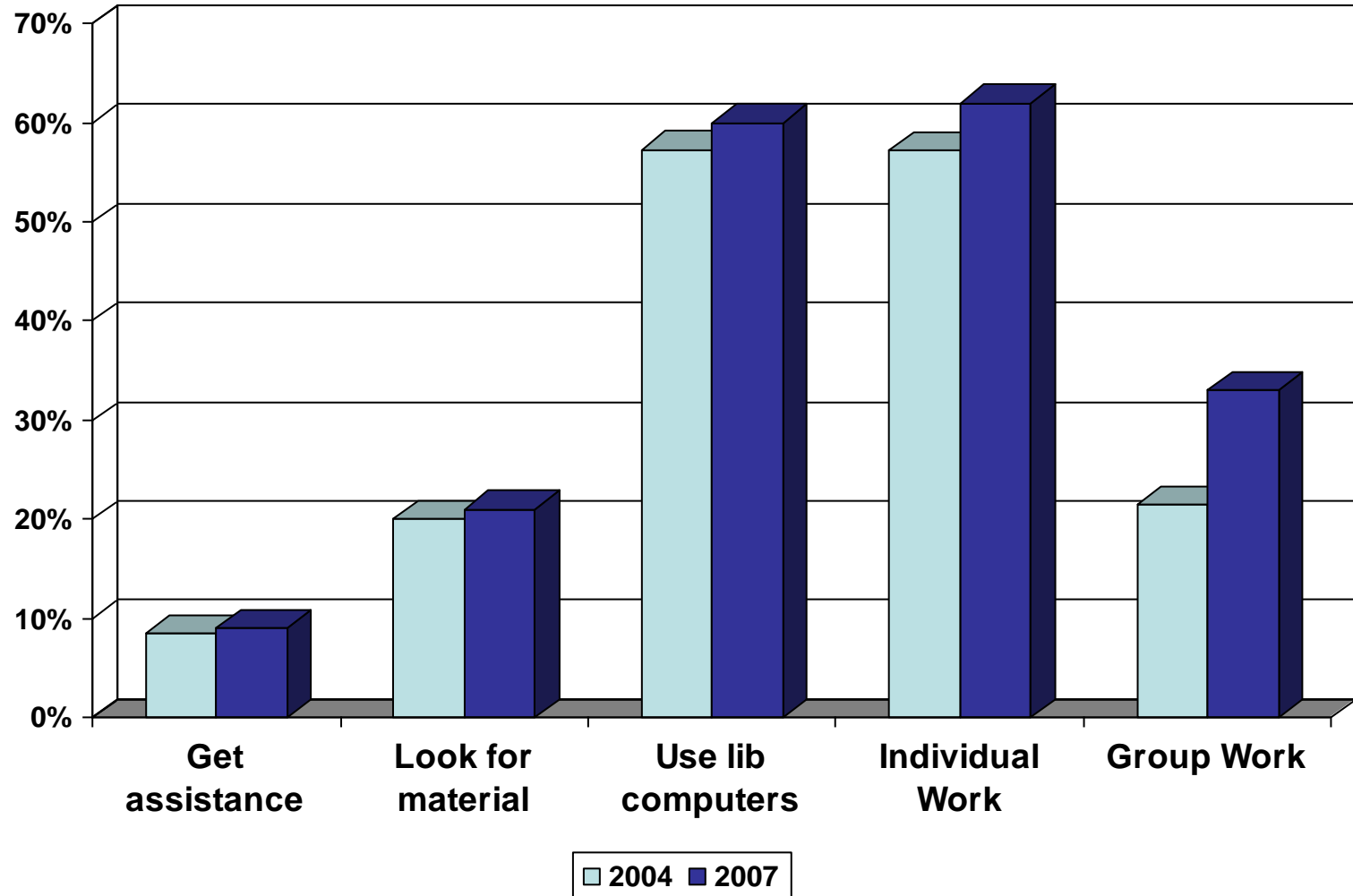
Off-Campus Remote Use 1998-2007

(Percentage using library services/collections at least 2x week)

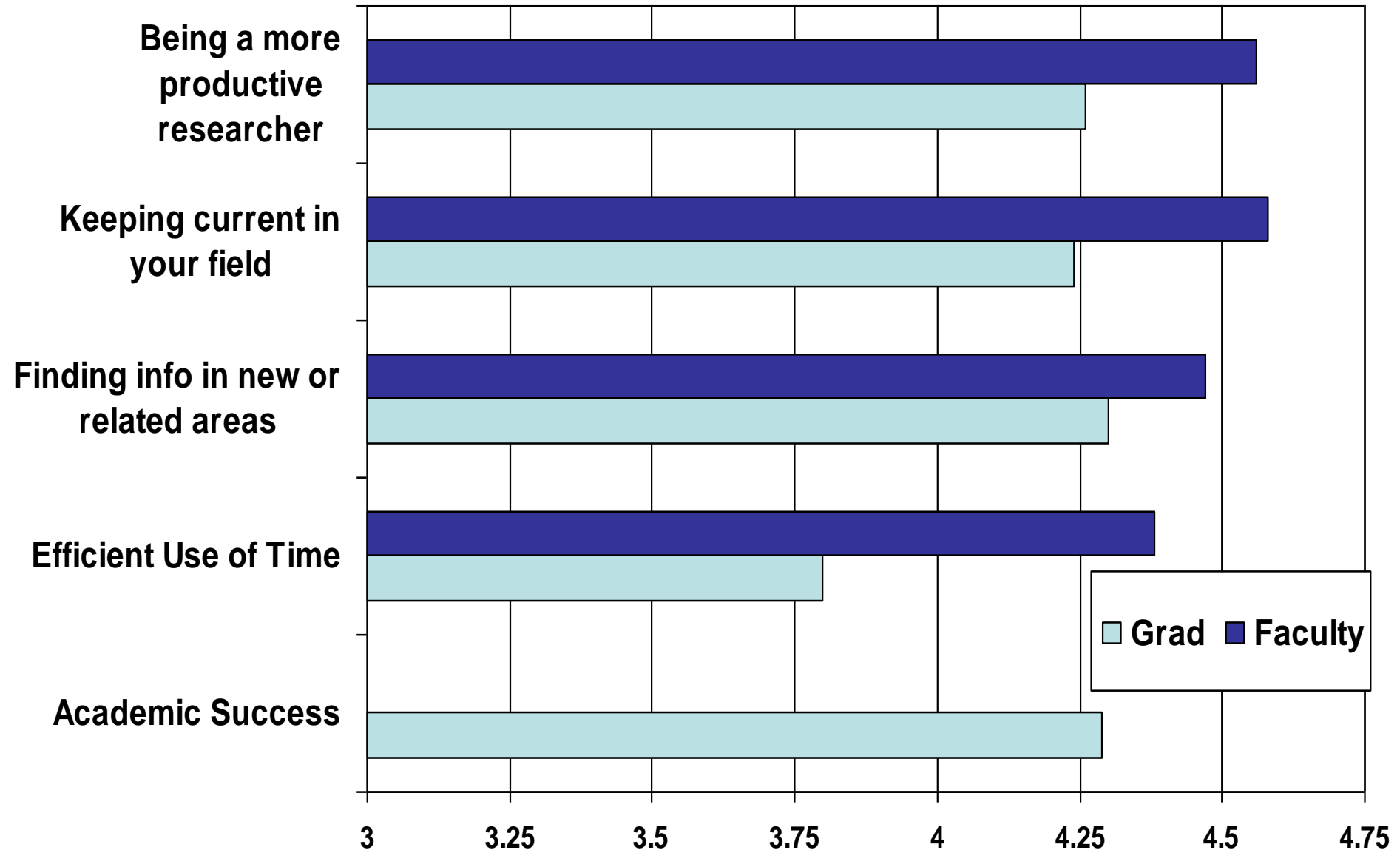


Library as Place - What Undergrads Do When They Visit Library

(% using at least weekly in 2004/2007 Triennial Survey)



Libraries Contribution to: (Scale of 1 “Minor” to 5 “Major”)



Making Data Meaningful

- Summarize
- Compare
- Analyze
- Present
- Go below the surface to examine results by:
 - Demographic group
 - Users and non-users
 - Stakeholders vs non-stakeholders
- Compare current data with information from the past
- How can we use the data for action?

Analyzing Qualitative Data

- Identify key themes
- Categorize them
- Review for:
 - Frequency
 - Extensiveness
 - Intensity
 - Body language
 - Specificity
 - Consistency
 - Language

Specialized (e.g. Atlas T.I.) or standard applications (e.g. MS Access) can be used to help analyze

Use Data Wisely

- Understand your data
- Know the limitations of your data
- Use appropriate analysis methods and tools
- Comparative data provide context and understanding
- Seek internal or external validation
- Identify what is important and why

Using Data Unwisely!



“ Oh, people can come up with statistics to prove anything Kent [Brockman]. 14% of people know that.”

“Facts are meaningless. You could use facts to prove anything that's even remotely true!”

Homer Simpson

Presenting Data and Results

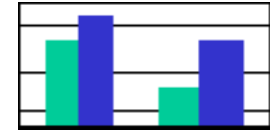
- Make sure data/results are:
 - Timely
 - Understandable
 - Usable
- Identify **important** findings/**key** results
 - What's important to know
 - What's actionable
- Present **key/important** results to:
 - Library administration/institutional administration
 - Library staff
 - Other libraries/interested parties/stakeholders

Presenting Results: What's Important

- What's the message?
 - Fewer “messages” means greater impact
- Who's the audience
 - Multiple audiences may need different presentations
- How is it presented?
 - Quantitative data
 - Tables, charts, text, “data”
 - Qualitative data
 - Be selective, use direct quotes from users
- How is the presentation structured?



Be Graphic!!!



“Often the most effective way to describe, explore and summarize a set of numbers – even a very large set – is to look at pictures of those numbers.

Furthermore, of all methods for analyzing and communicating statistical information, well designed data graphics are usually the simplest and at the same time the most powerful.”

Edward Tufte

The Visual Display of Quantitative Information

"The Leonardo da Vinci of data." THE NEW YORK TIMES

Closing the Loop: Using Data Effectively in Management

- Use multiple assessment methods
- Focus on user work and how they find & use information
- Increase reliance on qualitative info to identify issues from user perspective
- Learn from our users
- Partner with other campus programs/institutions
- Mine/repurpose existing data

Decisions based on data not assumptions -“assumicide”

Measuring Outcomes and Performance

- Outcomes are the effect of the library on the environment or target population
- Performance is the degree to which a library is achieving its objectives, particularly in term of users' needs
- Performance indicator (measure) is quantified statement used to evaluate the performance of the library in achieving its objectives

Developing Outcomes and Performance Indicators in Strategic Planning

Constructing a Balanced Scorecard:

Examples from The University of Virginia Library

- Four dimensions:
 - User perspective
 - Internal processes perspective
 - Finance perspective
 - Future/growth/learning perspective
- Select a limited number of meaningful and measurable indicators for each dimension
- Select targets for each indicator

Importance of Targets

- Measure quantitatively
- Set challenging, but achievable targets
- Consider two sets of targets:
 - Complete success
 - Partial success
- Aggregate regularly to provide feedback
- Address problems that are revealed

Choosing the Metrics

- Reflecting Values
 - What is important?
 - What are we trying to accomplish?
- Diversity and Balance
 - Innovations and operations
 - Variety of measurements
- Ensuring validity
 - Does the measurement accurately reflect the reality?
- Being Practical
 - Use existing measures when possible
 - Use sampling
 - Collect data centrally
 - Minimize work by front line

Examples – User Dimension

- **Overall rating in student and faculty surveys**
 - *Target1*: An average score of at least 4.25 (out of 5.00) from each of the major constituencies
 - *Target2*: A score of at least 4.00
- **Turnaround time for user requests**
 - *Target1*: 90% of user requests for new books should be filled within 7 days
 - *Target2*: 80% of user requests for new books should be filled within 7 days
 -

Examples: Internal Processes

- **Processing time for routine acquisitions**
 - *Target1*: Process 90% of in-print books from North America within one month.
 - *Target2*: Process 80% of in-print books from North America within one month.

Examples: Finance

- **Unit Cost (cost per download) of Electronic Serial Use**
 - *Target1*: There should be no increase in unit cost each year.
 - *Target2*: Less than 5% annual increase in unit cost.

Examples: Learning

- **Comparing librarian salaries to peer groups**
 - *Target1*: Average librarian salaries should rank in the top 40% of average salaries at ARL libraries.
 - *Target2*: Rank in top 50%.

To summarize...

The Balanced Scorecard

- Reflects the organization's vision
- Clarifies and communicates the vision
- Provides a quick, but comprehensive, picture of the organization's health

Developing an Assessment Plan

- Understand organizational mission, goals, objectives
- Align with library strategic plan and operations
- Identify and prioritize what's important
 - To the larger organization/community, customers and the library
- Develop meaningful outcomes
- Develop realistic performance indicators and measures
- Identify resource needs, data sources and action responsibilities and adjust plan as appropriate
- Develop and implement timeline
- Learn, evaluate and improve

The Goal is Practical Assessment Results That Can Be Used!

- Keep it simple and focused – “less is more”
- Know when “good ‘nuff” is good enough
- Focus on what is important to your customers and stakeholders
- Use assessment where it can add value to customers
- Present results so they are understandable and actionable
- Libraries are organized to act on results

And remember . . . it’s not about us!

Remember to Use Assessment Data for Good!

