

Learning from Assessment: Making Our Libraries Better

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Greetings From The Other “UW”

Across the country, not the river or state line



- Comprehensive research university in Seattle, WA
 - 27,000 undergraduate students
 - 11,000 graduate and professional students
 - 4,000 research and teaching faculty
- 1st among U.S. public univ. in federal research funds (\$600 million+ per year)
- Large library system with many libraries. Winner of the 2004 ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award

Library Assessment

Library assessment provides a structured process to learn about our communities, their library and information needs, how and why they use (or don't use) libraries, and how well the library supports their activities.

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.

Academic libraries do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a larger institution. Assessment within the institution may take place in individual areas as well as at the broad institutional level.

Higher Education Assessment Trends

- Externally mandated assessment efforts spurred by accrediting and funding bodies
- Emphasis on outcomes based assessment
- Strong focus on student learning outcomes
- Encourage integration of educational technology tools with teaching and learning
- Promote strategic planning process that defines institutional mission, vision and goals
- Evaluate whether institution's actions match it's articulated goals

Issues in Higher Education Assessment

- Outcomes based assessment can be complex
- Measures and tests become “proxies” for goals
- Higher education institutions are quite diverse
- What should be assessed differs among groups
- Measuring specific knowledge and/or cognitive growth
- Formative and summative assessment
- How to assess such values as personal, civic, and social
- Focus on teaching and learning, not sponsored research
- Time and expertise to do assessment right
- Buy in from stakeholders (esp. faculty)

Different Ways to Assess Undergraduate Learning Outcomes: Some Examples

- Good grades and jobs (students and parents!)
- Graduation and retention rates
- Skill sets, building blocks, competencies
- Products such as portfolios, papers, capstones
- Course and program evaluation
- Authentication through degrees, certificates, and standardized testing
- Service learning and contributions
- Entry to graduate programs
- Base for lifelong learning

What Are We Measuring?

“Institutional assessment efforts should not be concerned about valuing what can be measured, but instead about measuring what is valued.”

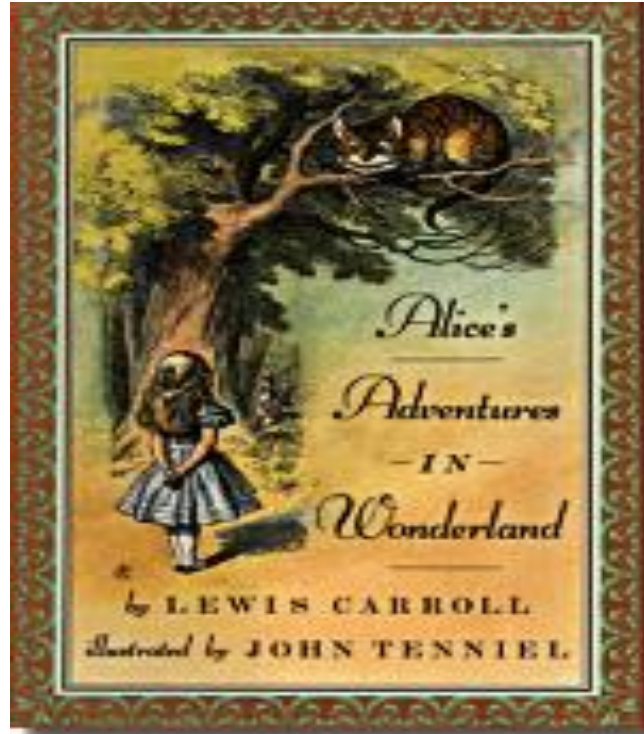
A.W. Astin, “Assessment for Excellence, 1991

“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

Libraries: The Times They Are A Changin’

How have things changed as far as getting your information in the past 5 years?



“We never have to go to the library”

(sounds of laughter and lots of paper ripping noise on audio tape)
Faculty Focus Group 2000 (UW College of Education)

Why Do Library Assessment?

- Library and information environments changing rapidly
- Library funding stagnant or declining at many places
- Widespread availability of other information sources
- Ensure that libraries add value to our community
- Improve organizational processes
- Justification and accountability to funding agencies
- Institutional or program accreditation
- Political benefits of user involvement

**SO LIBRARIES CAN BETTER SUPPORT OUR
COMMUNITIES**

1990's: Rise of User-Centered Library Concept and the Culture of Assessment

User-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

***A Culture of Assessment* is an integral part of the process of change and the creation of a user-centered library.**

The User-Centered Library

- Focuses on user information needs and services
- User is at the center of service and resource decisions
- Quality services and user satisfaction are goals shared by all library staff
- Personalized service that recognizes diverse user needs
- Operations organized to attain user-centered objectives
- Evaluation and assessment focused on user outcomes
- **Decisions are based on data not assumptions**
(“assumicide”)

Library Assessment: From Counting to Understanding

- **The Old Days: Bigger is better, inputs and outputs**
 - More dollars = more books, journals, and staff
 - Library quality determined by size and funding
- **Measuring Use: Counting output**
 - Use of print and electronic resources
 - Use of other resources and services
 - Use of facilities
- **User Needs Assessment and Behavior: Why and How**
 - Learning why and how libraries are needed and used
 - Learning how libraries add value to the academic endeavor
- **Using Assessment Data to Make Our Libraries Better**
 - That's the hard part!

ARL New Measures: Key Areas

- User Satisfaction (**LibQUAL+**)
- Market Penetration
- Ease and Breadth of Access
- Library Impact on Teaching and Learning (**SAILS**)
- Library Impact on Research
- Cost Effectiveness of Library Operations and Services
- Library Facilities and Space
- Organizational Capacity

Multidimensional Library Assessment: Moving Beyond Counting and Satisfaction Surveys

- Data based decision making needs good data sources
 - Development of management information services
- Use of multiple assessment methods
- Focus on user needs and information seeking and using behavior
- Increased reliance on qualitative data to identify issues from the perspective of users
- Learning from our users
- Partnering with other campus programs
- Understanding and using assessment data
- Making library assessment ongoing and sustainable

Assessment Methods: Many Choices, Start Slowly and Simply with Appropriate Ones

- Interviews
- Observation
- Ad Hoc Surveys (e.g. Web pop ups)
- Controlled surveys
- Usability
- Focus groups
- Performance standards and benchmarking
- Pretests/Posttests
- Usage

More Tools in the Box: Multiple Methods for More Effective Assessment

- Different methods may complement one another
- Follow up with another method that's more appropriate
- Large projects may need different approaches
- Acquire both quantitative and qualitative information
- Provide three dimensional view of issues or users
- “Two Proofs” (cross validation)
- Review already existing data (such as use statistics)

Understanding Your Community



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

Community Assessment: What We Need to Know

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

Understand Diversity in Your Communities

- Library and information needs and use may differ substantially by academic area, groups, and culture
- Identifying and understanding these differences enables libraries to target and market services that add the most value for each group or area
- Multiple assessment methods, including both quantitative and qualitative data, can identify differences and provide the most comprehensive picture of these communities

Some examples follow from the University of Washington

UW Libraries Assessment Methods

- Large scale user surveys every 3 years (“triennial survey”): 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004
 - Surveys sent to “all” faculty (3800)
 - Surveys sent to sample of students (1500 grad, 2000 UG)
 - 2004 survey is Web-based, earlier surveys paper
- In-library use surveys every 3 years beginning 1993
- LibQUAL+™ in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003
- Focus groups (annually since 1998)
- Observation/interviews (guided and non-obtrusive)
- Usability
- Usage

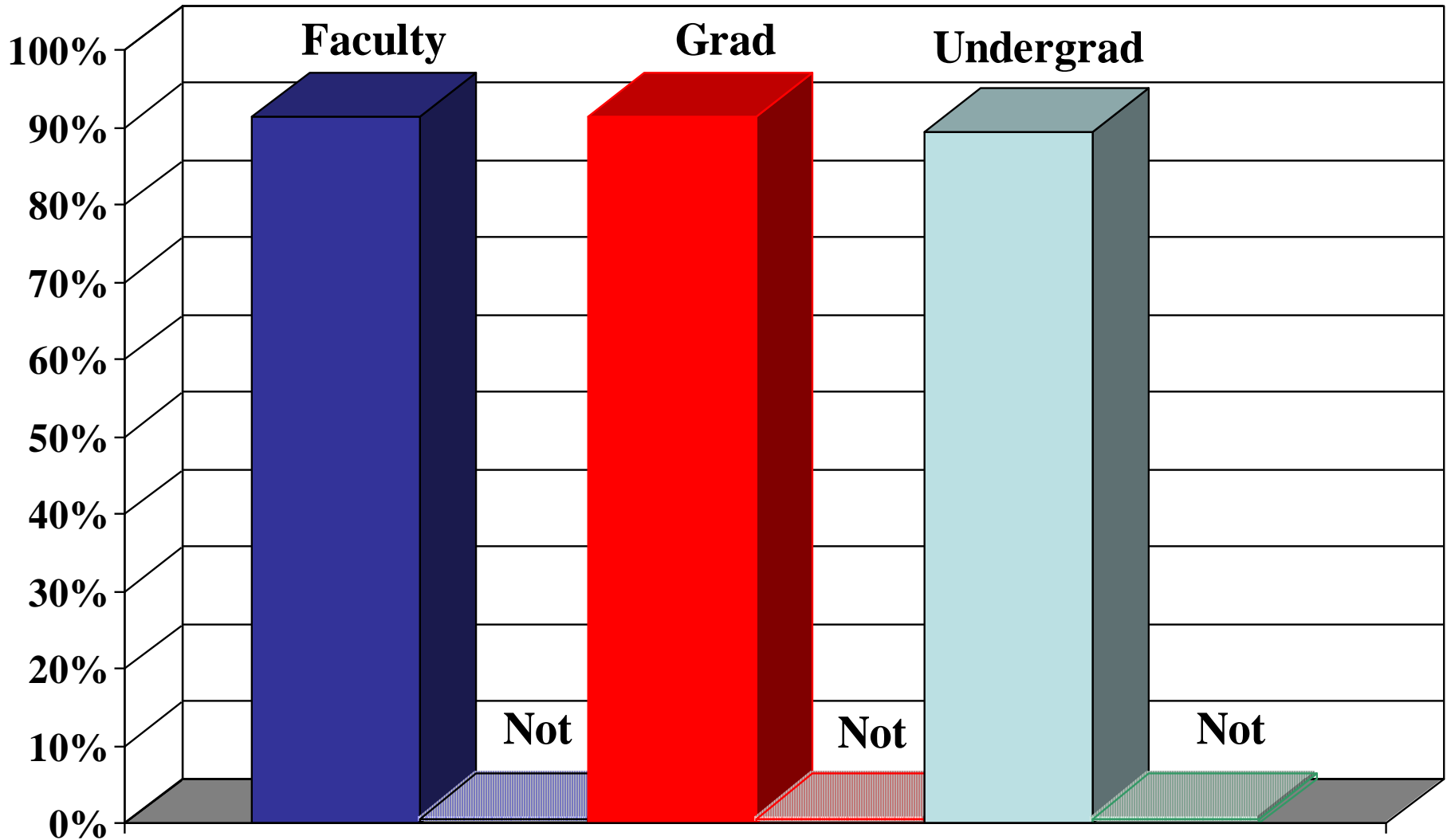
Information about assessment program available at:

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

Survey Data 2001

Overall Satisfaction by Group

Percentage very satisfied and not satisfied



Survey Data

Library Use Patterns 1998 and 2001

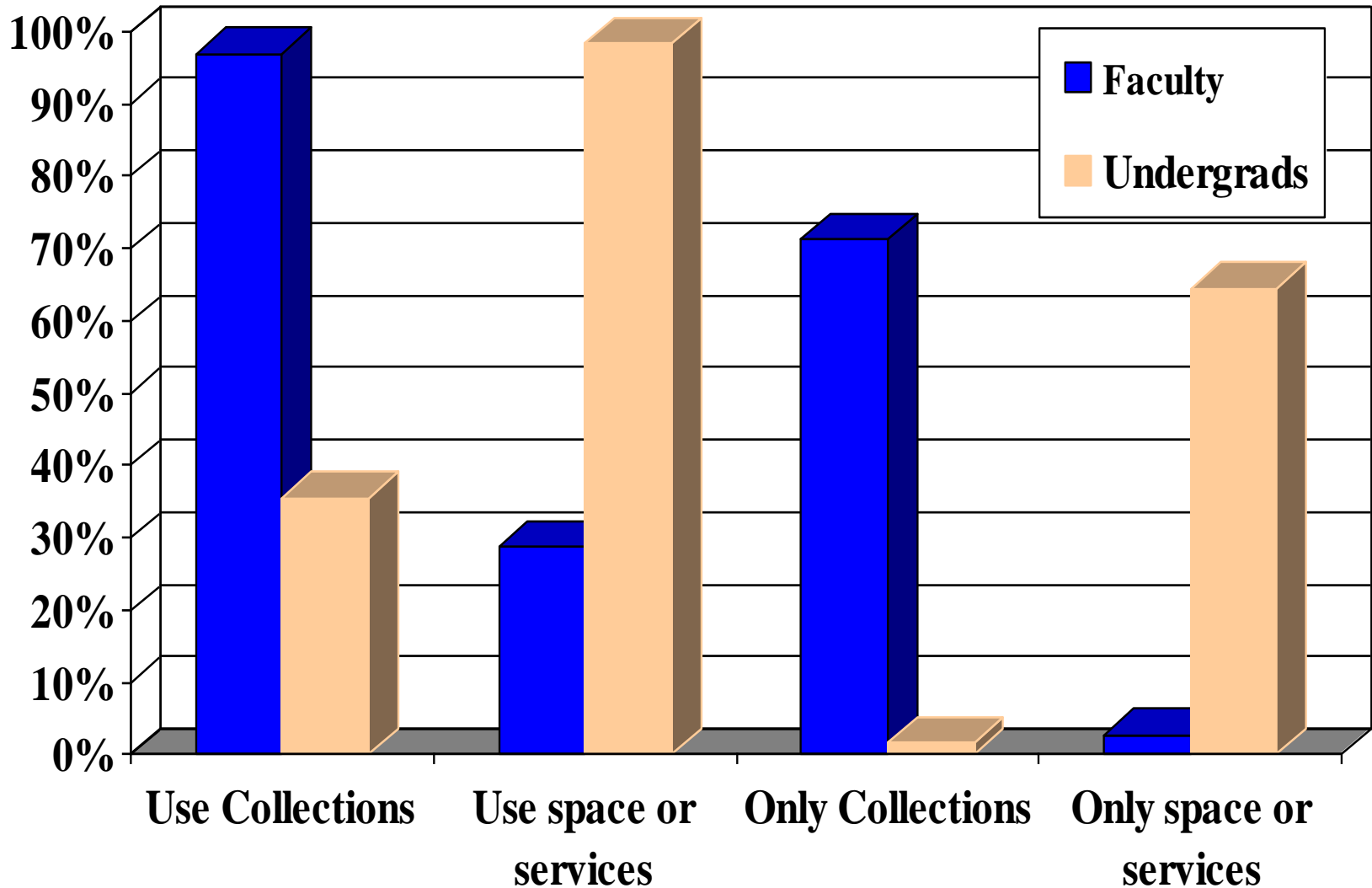
(% of each group who use library at least weekly)

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

Survey Data 2001

Reasons for Visiting Libraries

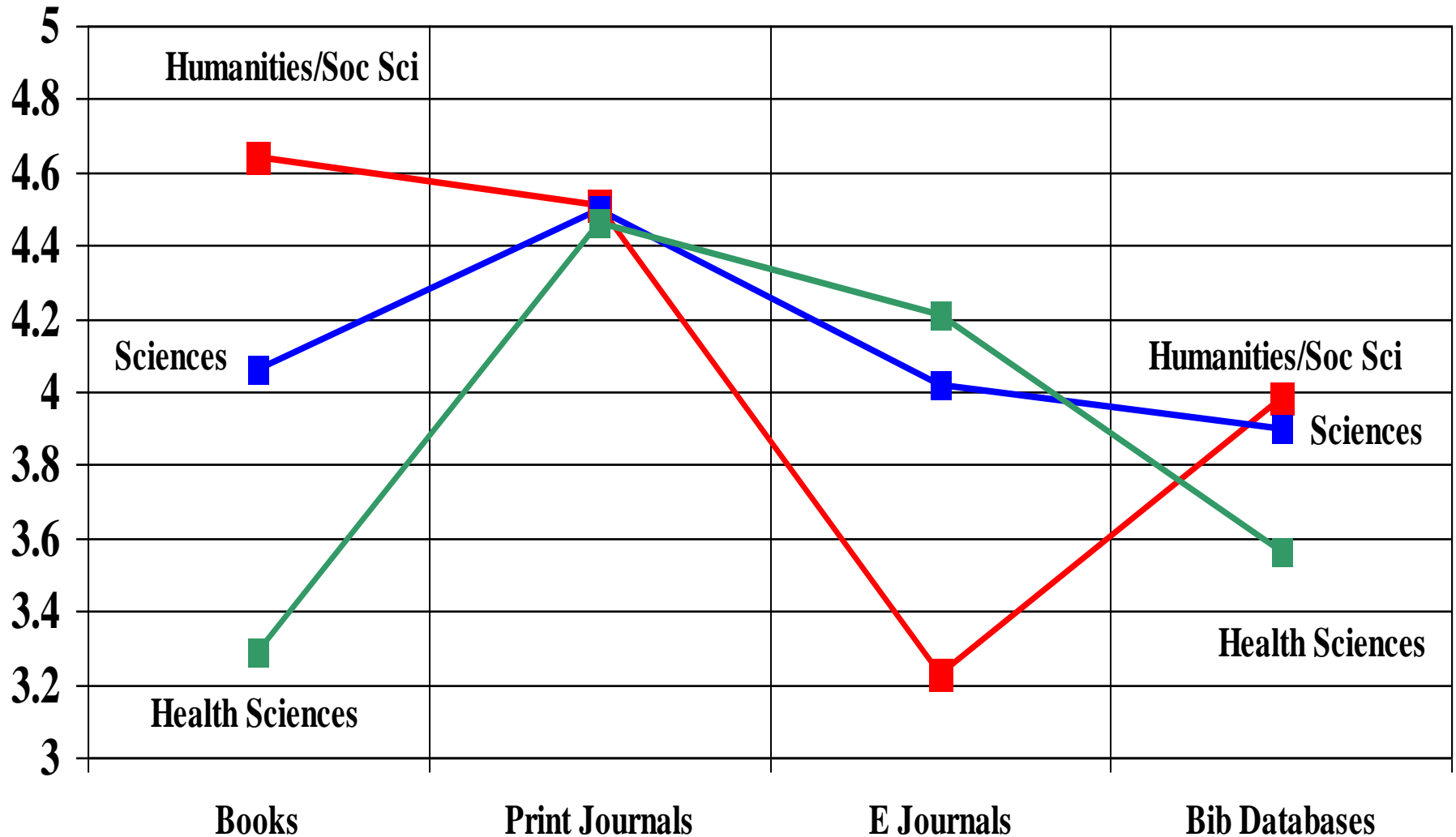
Faculty and Undergrads (Among those visiting at least weekly)



Faculty Survey Data 2001

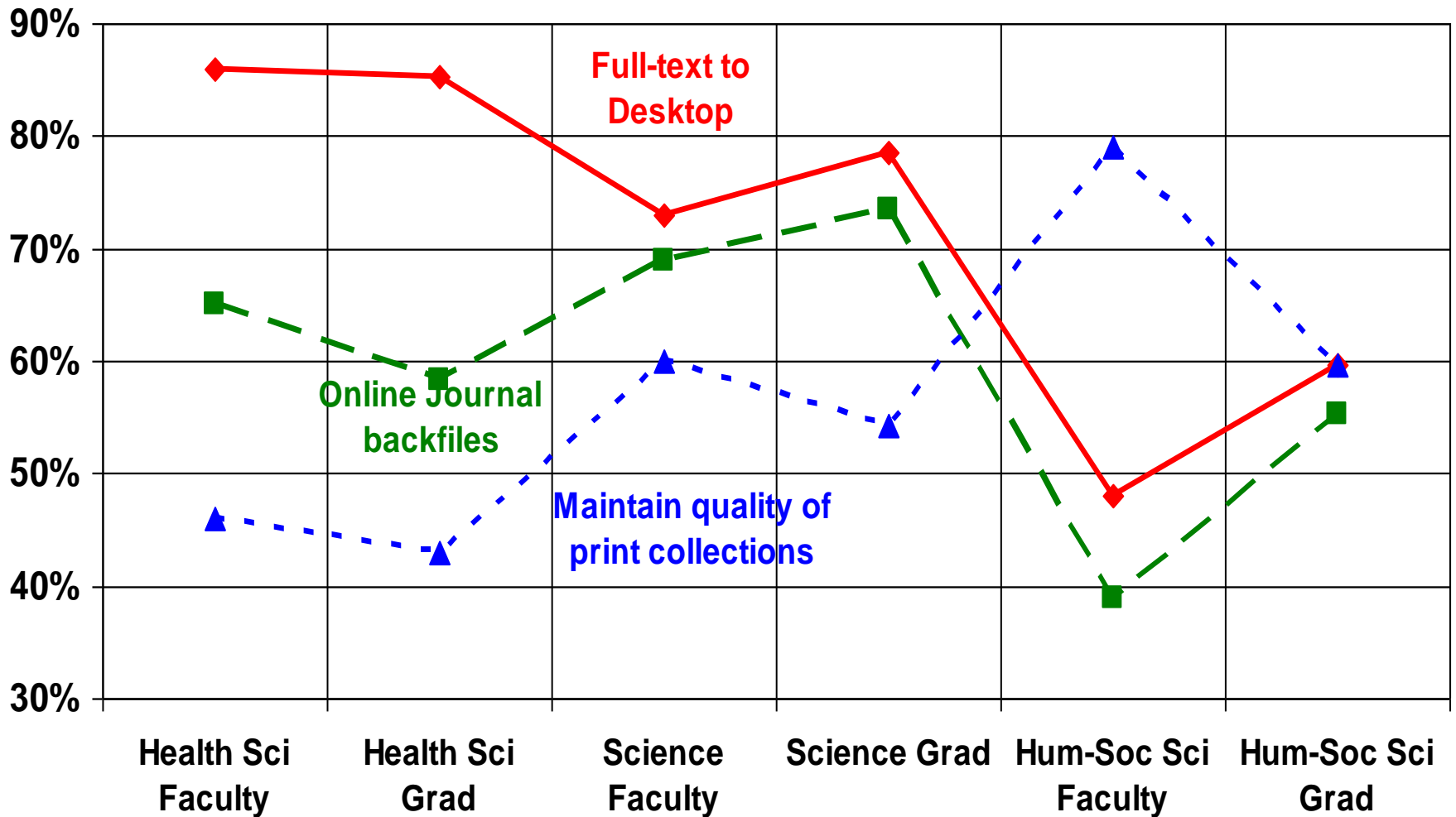
Resource Type Importance by Academic Area

Mean scores on scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high)



Survey Data 2001

Priorities of Faculty and Graduate Students



Focus Groups (2002-03)

Impact of library on research; library research competencies of undergrad students

- 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 remains important

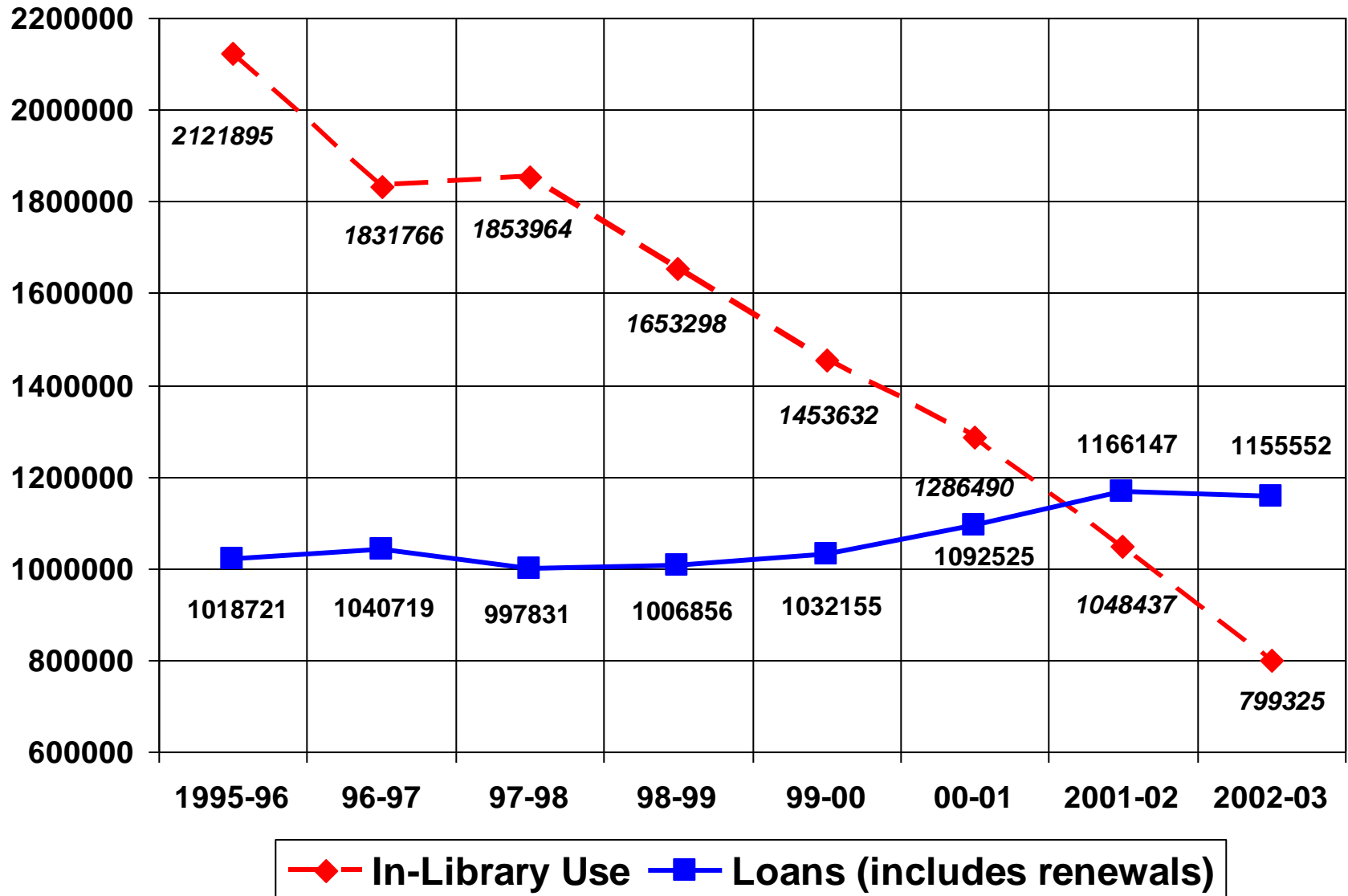
Guided Observation (March 2003)

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**

Using Existing Data

UW Libraries Print/Media Items Used 1995-96 to 2002-03



Using Assessment Data to Make Libraries Better



Easier Said Than Done

- Libraries in many cases are collecting data without really having the will, organizational capacity, or interest to interpret and use the data effectively in library planning.
- The profession could benefit from case studies of those libraries that have conducted research efficiently and applied the results effectively. Understanding how these institutions created a program of assessment – how they integrated assessment into daily library operations, how they organized the effort, how they secured commitment of human and financial resources, and what human and financial resources they committed – would be helpful to the many libraries currently taking an ad hoc approach to assessment and struggling to organize their effort.
- (Troll Covey, Usage and Usability Assessment: Practices and Concerns, 2002)

Understanding, Communicating and Using Assessment Data

- Make sure assessment results are:
 - Timely
 - Understandable
 - Usable
- Identify important findings/key results
- Present key results to:
 - Library administration/institutional administration
 - Library staff
 - Community who participated
 - Other libraries/interested parties/stakeholders
- Identify action areas and responsible parties
- Use the results

What We've Learned About/From the UW Community

- Libraries remain very important to learning and research
- Community satisfaction is high
- Library needs/use patterns vary by and within academic areas and groups (e.g. faculty and undergrads)
- Library as place remains important to undergraduates, less so for graduates, least important for faculty
- Faculty and students use libraries differently than librarians think they do (or prefer them too)
- Library/information environment is perceived as too complex; users find simpler ways (Google) to get info
- Remote access is preferred and has changed the way faculty and students work and use libraries

How UW Has Used Assessment Information

- Understand that library and info needs differ between academic areas and groups
 - Plan and deliver services tailored to these differences
- Make our physical libraries “student” places
 - Reduce collections space, add computers, specialized work areas
 - Open undergraduate library 24 hours
- Identify student information technology needs
 - Work with other campus groups to address them
- Move rapidly to desktop delivery of resources and services
- Enhance resource discovery tools
- Provide standardized service training for all staff
- Stop doing activities that do not add value to users
- Consolidate and merge branch libraries

Let Us Learn in Order to Teach

Let Us Learn In Order to Do

(Rabbinical saying)