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Introducing the new ACRL Trends and Statistics Survey; Changes for 2015

Georgie Donovan, *William and Mary*
Teresa Fishel, *bepress (DC Admins)*

Georgie Donovan and Teresa A. Fishel

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Changes for 2015

Statistics. You either love them or hate them. You're either a number cruncher who loves to create spreadsheets and manipulate the data to create fabulous charts and graphs, or you're someone who finds the whole task of collecting data onerous and would love to hand it off to some other colleague. Whether you embrace the role of collecting annual statistics or not, it is important to remember that many libraries rely on the statistics that are collected and published by ACRL to do analysis, comparisons, and benchmarks for their own institution. Libraries of every size use the ACRL and IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) data to inform their decision-making or to make the case for a budget or policy change.

With these factors in mind, understanding the new ACRL annual survey and having a discussion within your organization about which statistics are required and how to count them is crucial. This survey now includes the questions asked by IPEDS, so you will be able to answer one set of questions and use a subset of those responses to submit to your campus key holder for your IPEDS submission.

All of us, including the number crunchers who love statistics, will benefit from reviewing the changes made to the survey this year. As we share information about the new survey, we also ask you to become actively involved in making sure your library contributes to this national project.

Integration between ACRL and IPEDS

Late this summer, the ACRL Board of Directors approved a major revision of the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey based on recommendations from the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board. The revised survey was developed over a period of ten months and involved presentations describing the proposed changes, as well as collecting feedback from the academic library community. The revised survey features:

- questions and instructions that are *easier* to understand and therefore easier for libraries to answer,
- *relevant* questions that are both important to answer and more useful for comparison, and
- an *ACRL instrument* that can be modified as needed.

The editorial board spent considerable time reviewing instructions and definitions to make sure there was consistency and clarity in the hope that improved instructions would minimize time spent on interpreting the questions. Completing the survey takes time, so with efficiency

Georgie Donovan is associate dean for collections and content services at College of William and Mary, email: gldonovan@wm.edu, and Teresa A. Fishel is library director at Macalester College, email: fishel@macalester.edu

in mind, an added feature is that the new survey collects responses for two surveys: the ACRL annual survey and the IPEDS.

As many of you know, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) biennial Academic Library Survey was discontinued in 2012. That biennial survey was replaced in the 2013-14 collection year with the much shorter, annual Academic Libraries component of the larger campus IPEDS survey that all institutions receiving federal financial aid must complete. The Academic Libraries component of IPEDS is collected in the spring following the end of your library's fiscal year. (Fiscal year 2015 is defined by IPEDS as the most recent 12-month period that ends before October 1, 2015, that corresponds to the institution's fiscal year.)

Whereas the older NCES surveys were distributed to and collected directly from libraries, participating in the larger campus-wide IPEDS survey means that the "key holder" for the survey will likely be in the institution's administrative offices, office of institutional research, or office of compliance. Depending on your local school's policies, your key holder may provide you with an account to submit your statistics into the IPEDS database directly or may ask you to send in a spreadsheet with responses to the survey questions.

The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board worked closely with representatives from IPEDS and the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to agree on a common set of definitions for the surveys. Once libraries submit their ACRL surveys, they can then use the ACRL survey tool to download the IPEDS subset of data and email that file to the IPEDS institutional key holder on your campus.

In other words, libraries only need to complete a single set of questions because the new ACRL survey includes all of the IPEDS Academic Libraries component questions. This is good news for the many librarians who have juggled multiple spreadsheets of statistics and varying definitions of how surveys define e-books, FTEs, or serials.

ARL will continue its annual survey, but ARL members are encouraged to complete the ACRL annual survey, *in addition* to the ARL survey, to take advantage of the direct alignment with the IPEDS Academic Library component. This also helps ACRL have a better data set for institutional use in comparisons and includes responses from ARL libraries in the data regarding trends.

Although the ARL survey has provided valuable trend data and analysis in the past, the hope is that the ARL libraries will see the value in contributing their data using the new ACRL survey to take advantage of the direct alignment with the IPEDS Academic Library component and also contribute their data to provide benchmarks for the profession.

Trends: New questions in the survey

The annual ACRL survey always includes a few questions about library trends and new issues. The new survey also reflects the changing needs of 21st-century academic libraries and includes new quantitative questions on institutional repositories, consultations as well as reference transactions, and expenditures for e-books. The survey also restores some important questions from the former NCES Academic Library Survey, including gate count and hours of operation, both used by many libraries for peer and aspirant benchmarking and best practices.

The revised survey includes additional questions to address some of the limitations of the IPEDS survey, and the compiled data will provide more detailed (and timely) data on library staff, gate counts and hours of operation, as well as details concerning interlibrary loan transactions than will be collected in the IPEDS.

Additional specific changes or clarifications to the statistics survey including the following:

• The instructions for the survey have been revised and a glossary has been added.

• Some counts (including e-books) can now include titles in aggregated sets, making it easier to use a knowledge base to help "count" the total number of resources.

• Several counts now ask for *titles* instead of *units,* which makes it easier to determine what to count.

• There are instructions for using COUNTER compliant metrics from vendors in calculating the usage of digital/electronic collections.

• Student wage summaries will now include Federal Work Study students' wages.

The ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board felt it was important to have some flexibility as well as agility in updating the survey to reflect a wide range of institutions, including community colleges as well as research institutions. The board included members from many differently sized libraries, who have worked in many different areas of academic librarianship to help ensure that

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For more information

The following are additional resources:

• News about the new statistics: ACRL Insider Blog, September 15, 2015, www. acrl.ala.org/acrlinsider/archives/10713.

• 2015 Survey form and instructions: The ACRL Annual Survey form, instructions, and trend questions are available online: https://acrl.countingopinions.com/.

• Survey instructions: https://acrl. countingopinions.com/docs/acrl/Instructions_definitions_2015.pdf and https:// acrl.countingopinions.com/docs/acrl /ACRL_2015_Survey_Form.pdf.

• 2015 Trends (institutional repositories): https://acrl.countingopinions.com /docs/acrl/FY15_Trends.pdf.

• The IPEDS Academic Libraries component: https://surveys.nces.ed.gov /ipeds/visresults.aspx (scroll to the very bottom) and http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds /Section/Alscenter (Academic Libraries Information Center).

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the survey questions would be relevant to almost any organization.

Importance of your participation

While the IPEDS Academic Library component is mandatory for all higher education institutions, the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Survey is not. However, we want to emphasize how important it is for all libraries to participate and to respond to the survey invitation that was sent to your institution on September 18, 2015.

Why participate? The value of the survey data is enhanced by the participation of all libraries representing all Carnegie Classifications and, as members of the ACRL Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board, we need your help to meet this goal.

We all face stiff competition on our campuses for funding, and in these times of limited resources, more and more academic libraries must include data in their funding and program requests. This is especially true for requests for outside funding. By participating in the 2015 survey, you are not only providing the profession with timely data to inform decision making at a wide variety of institutions, but you also help colleagues and researchers facilitate comparisons through benchmarking within peer groups, as well as helping libraries present data that demonstrate the value we provide to our institutions and beyond. The data may help make a case in a research study or inform the academic library profession globally. The requests for this type of data and possible uses are endless.

If you are not sure whether your library participates in the annual ACRL survey, it may be worth asking the director. Because of job and role changes within your library, there could be an unintentional gap in responding to the survey. Last year, ACRL contacted 3,298 libraries, including community colleges, four-year colleges, and research universities to participate, and received submissions from 1,408 libraries, a response rate of 43%. This year, with the

changes and the integration between this survey and the required IPEDS questions, we hope to reach 50% participation. For us to reach that goal, we need your help.

Deadlines and dates

The first email to libraries from ACRL was shared on September 18, 2015, with a link to the website to submit data. If you have questions or need to change the contact information for the survey, you can contact Counting Opinions by emailing acrlsupport@countingopinions.com or by calling (800) 542-9847 (9:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. EST). The data collection period ends April 30, 2016, and it is anticipated that the 2015 data will be available by mid-June with publication of the print edition to follow in the fall of 2016. Complimentary access to the aggregate survey results will be provided to all who participate in the 2015 survey.

Conclusion

We know that compiling statistics takes time, but the contribution of your data is essential and extremely valuable for your colleagues. We are asking you to help ensure that we have the data to help assess trends in 21st-century academic libraries. This data is also invaluable for benchmarking and peer comparisons. All participants in the survey will receive complimentary access to the aggregate survey results (by Carnegie Classification) as soon as the data results are uploaded (June/July 2016.) As an added incentive, you can also help us develop future surveys by providing suggestions for additional questions, improvements to definitions, and future trends to explore.

We hope you'll agree the results are well worth the time you spend in compiling the data. And for those of you who truly embrace the role of collecting statistics, in the spring we will be sharing a webinar on dashboards and how to incorporate the statistics you collect into visually interesting presentations for your community. 𝓝

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dollar amount, along with catalog pages or website printouts marked to indicate specific titles to be sent to each location. In other words, multicampus collaboration not only involves willing librarians, but attentive and flexible staff, too.

Conclusion

Education librarians at University Park and Harrisburg are pleased with the results of ongoing collaboration. While retaining much of the individual decision-making authority we value, we are enhancing our instructional materials and reducing duplication. Most importantly, new resources are distributed to several locations. This serves faculty and students well, especially if they only need to compare several programs or show a few examples in class. Also, local teachers have a wider selection that they can borrow immediately, with the remaining levels or titles available within a few days through the intercampus library loan. Finally, through five years of discussions, Karla and Bernadette have also learned a great deal about each location's course offerings, student needs, and collection strengths. Next steps include further coordinated purchasing of Newbery, Caldecott, and other award-winners, to ensure that PSUL has enough (but not too many!) copies of *Frog and Toad* and other children's favorites.

Notes

1. Arnold Lobel, *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 7–8.

2. National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts: Most Popular Majors," http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=37.

3. Natalia Gelber and Jean Uhl, "Managing a Curriculum Materials Collection: One Academic Library Experience," *Collection Management* 38 (2013): 51–66. 𝓝