Opting In or Out of Checkout History
What Drives Patrons’ Decisions about Their Library Data

November 2, 2022
Library Assessment Conference
Craig Smith / Assessment Specialist
Ken Varnum / Senior Program Manager
Opting in or Out of Checkout History

- Introduction & Background
- Methods & Participants
- Findings
- Concluding Thoughts
Introduction & Background
Checkout History at our Library

- Prior to April 2016, we had no checkout history for catalog items
- At prompting of our new dean, we started a checkout history service
- With a major system migration in July 2021, we made checkout history a user choice. Default option depended on existing checkout history:
  - If had checked out an item from April 2016-July 2021, can opt to delete/stop or continue
  - If not, can opt to start, or not to start
Broad Patterns of Use

Overall, about 93% of users who have made a choice opted to keep or start a checkout history.

- 92% of those with one, kept it (637 of 692)
- 93.5% of those without one, started one (862 of 922)

With all the discussion about privacy in our library and in the library community, these figures surprised us.
We Wanted to Know More

- We have received very little feedback on this service (in Library IT, or at service points)
- We wanted to make sure we understood how users perceive privacy in this context and why they chose the way they did
- Decided to survey users who had recently chosen to opt in or opt out of a checkout history
Methods & Participants
Recruitment Approach

Survey Version 1
- Sent in two unique batches to 675 people who had made opt-in/out choices by:
  - September 17, 2021
  - November 2, 2021
- Valid-case response rate was 37%

Survey Version 2
- Sent in two unique batches to 968 people who had made opt-in/out choices by:
  - June 21, 2022
  - August 24, 2022
- Valid-case response rate was 26%

Due to nearly identical nature of surveys and samples, most analyses are pooled
Key Survey Questions

- Explanation & consent
- Campus role question
- Confirm opt-in/out choice
- Why choice was made? (open-ended)
- Consider alternate choice? (survey version 2 only)
- What alternate considerations? (open-ended)
- Previously aware of checkout history?
- If yes, how often used?
- Level of concern about data management practices used by:
  - U-M Library
  - U-M more broadly
  - Internet-based companies
- Member of marginalized group?
Study Participants

- No significant differences across makeup of the studies
- Analyses combined when appropriate

No: 54.5%  Yes: 45.5%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Role (all)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grad Student</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT, RT, CT Faculty</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergrad</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians, Archivists, Curators</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alum</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated Researcher</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Member</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles in Analyses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT, RT, CT Faculty</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians, Archivists, Curators</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 91% in the want-it group; consistent with larger group that has made an opt-in / opt-out choice
Findings
Opt-in Choices by Campus Role

Chi-square analyses

Librarians, curators, and archivists less likely to want history preserved compared to all other groups (p-values ranged from .05 to < .001)

Staff less likely than students (p = .02)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale for checkout history use (for those aware of it)</th>
<th>Scale for level of concern in data management by: U-M library, broader university, &amp; internet companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Never</td>
<td>1. Not at all concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A few times a year</td>
<td>2. Mildly concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A few times a semester</td>
<td>3. Moderately concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. About once a month</td>
<td>4. Very concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A few times a month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Once a week or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean Concern Levels by Opt-In/Out Choice

All concern variables correlated (p-values < .001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of History</th>
<th>Concern: U-M Library</th>
<th>Concern: U-M</th>
<th>Concern: Internet Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concern: Library

-0.63

Concern: U-M

0.34

0.45

Mean Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don't Want</th>
<th>Want</th>
<th>Don't Want</th>
<th>Want</th>
<th>Don't Want</th>
<th>Want</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U-M Library</td>
<td></td>
<td>U-M</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internet Co.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.54</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main effects significant (p-values < .001)

More concern in ‘don’t want’ group.

Less overall concern with library.
# Mean Concern Levels by Campus Role

1 = Not at all concerned; 4 = Very concerned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern about Library</th>
<th>Concern about U-M</th>
<th>Concern about Internet Co.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarians, Curators, Archivists</td>
<td>Librarians, Curators, Archivists</td>
<td>Librarians, Curators, Archivists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT, RC, CC Faculty</td>
<td>TT, RC, CC Faculty</td>
<td>TT, RC, CC Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main effects of focus of concern ($p < .001$) & role ($p = .05$)
Reasons Given for Opting In & Opting Out

69% in Study 2 didn’t consider alternative choice; 31% did

Top Reasons History Wanted (in descending order of frequency)

- Like to have it as a reading list to refer to, share with others, etc.
- Having history enables future research activity
- Simply want it (no details)
- Future use (not specified)

Top Reasons History Not Wanted (in descending order of frequency)

- Have privacy concerns
- Library doesn’t need it or shouldn’t have it
- Don’t want it, probably wouldn’t use it
Analyses as a Function of Experiencing Marginalization or Underrepresentation

We want to understand how groups that have been underrepresented or marginalized in academia think about data and privacy issues. Our goal is to serve everyone in our campus community sensitively and responsibly. This question, like others in this survey, is completely optional.

Are you a member of one or more groups that have been underrepresented or marginalized on college and university campuses?

(Examples include being underrepresented or marginalized on the basis of race, gender identity, disability status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, etc.)

- This question was lacked necessary nuance
- We did not find any differences as a function of this variable
- In future research: We will ask more nuanced questions about identity
  - And as with all questions, these will be optional
Concluding Thoughts
Summary of our Findings

- Librarians have heightened sense of privacy concerns, relative to campus
- Students, faculty, staff, others have nuanced understanding of risks and benefits
- Library is better trusted than campus or Internet in general
Next Steps and Future Research

- Continue surveying people who make a choice
- Develop a way to proactively alert our users that they have a choice about their checkout history
- Future research questions
  - How can we better understand library employee concerns about privacy in the context of broader campus trends?
  - Are these results similar or different in the broader library community?
  - How do others in the library community handle opt-in/opt-out options?
Thank you!

Craig Smith
craigsm@umich.edu

Ken Varnum
varnum@umich.edu

Link to survey instrument:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1di-se8rr5-YCaRNQYtMliZ9xcgKEjUn/view?usp=sharing