

# Opting In or Out of Checkout History

## What Drives Patrons' Decisions about Their Library Data

November 2, 2022

Library Assessment Conference

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# Opting in or Out of Checkout History

- Introduction & Background
- Methods & Participants
- Findings
- Concluding Thoughts

# Introduction & Background

# Checkout History at our Library

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- 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

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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

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- 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

## Checkout History

You have chosen to keep a record of your [checkout history](#).

If you would like us to delete your checkout history and stop adding items to it, please update your preferences.

You can change this preference at any time.

Learn more about [Checkout History Options](#).

Yes, record my checkout history.

No, do not record my checkout history.

If you'd like to make a copy of your checkout history up to this point, you can download it to your device in a spreadsheet format (CSV file).

Download your checkout history

Update history preferences

# Methods & Participants

# Recruitment Approach

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## 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**

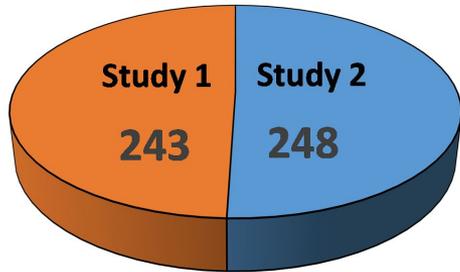
# Key Survey Questions

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- 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?

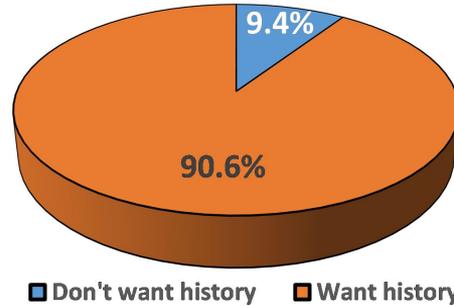
# Study Participants

Number of Participants



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

Choice Made



- 91% in the want-it group; consistent with larger group that has made an opt-in / opt-out choice

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

Roles in Analyses	N	%
Students	180	43.4%
Staff	97	23.4%
TT, RT, CT Faculty	95	22.9%
Librarians, Archivists, Curators	43	10.4%

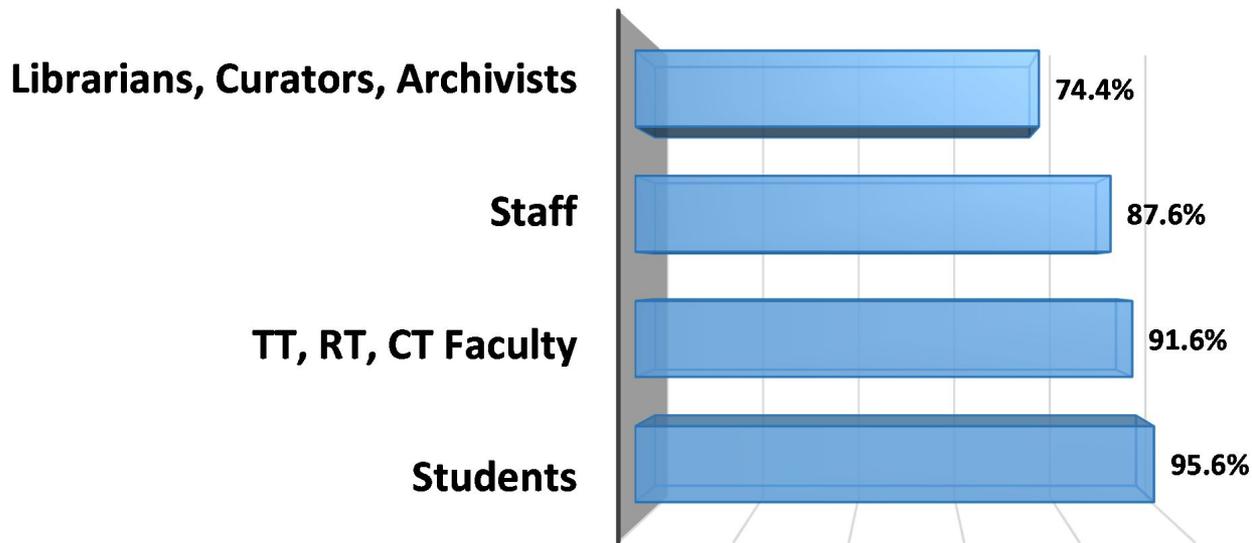
**Member of underrepresented or marginalized group at university?**

**No: 54.5%**

**Yes: 45.5%**

# 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)

# Scales Used for History Use & Data Management Concerns

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## Scale for checkout history use (for those aware of it)

1. Never
2. A few times a year
3. A few times a semester
4. About once a month
5. A few times a month
6. Once a week or more

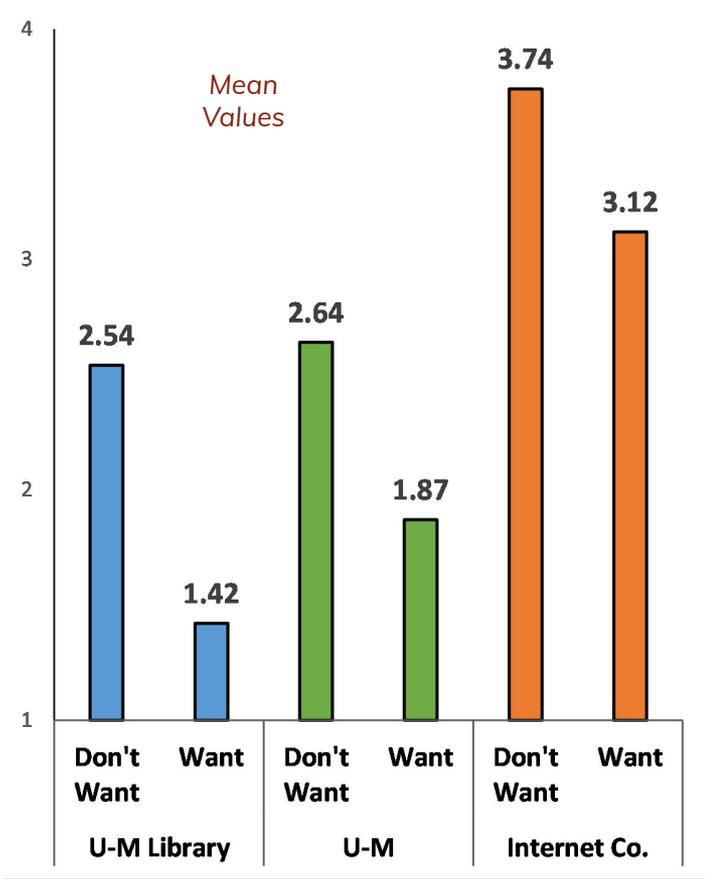
## Scale for level of concern in data management by: U-M library, broader university, & internet companies

1. Not at all concerned
2. Mildly concerned
3. Moderately concerned
4. Very concerned

# Mean Concern Levels by Opt-In/Out Choice

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

	Concen: U-M Library	Concern: U-M	Concern: Internet Companies
Use of History	-0.13	-0.11	-0.15
Concen: Library		<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.34</b>
		Concern: U-M	<b>0.45</b>



Main effects significant (p-values < .001)

More concern in 'don't want' group.

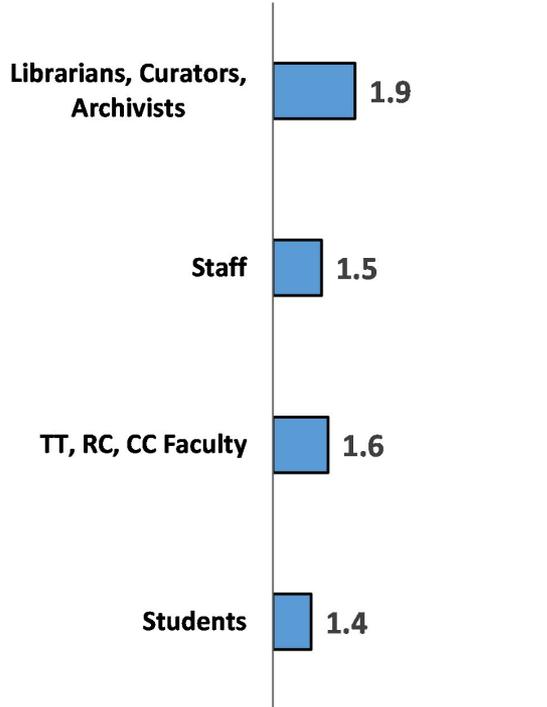
Less overall concern with library.

# Mean Concern Levels by Campus Role

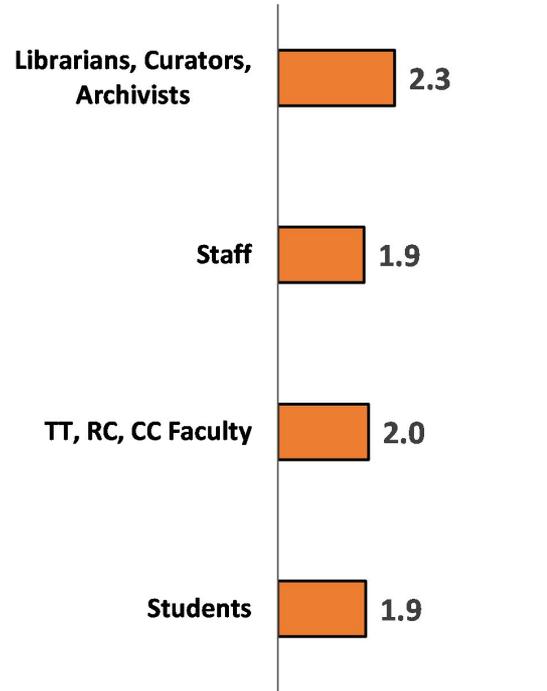
Main effects of focus of concern ( $p < .001$ ) & role ( $p = .05$ )

1 = Not at all concerned; 4 = Very concerned

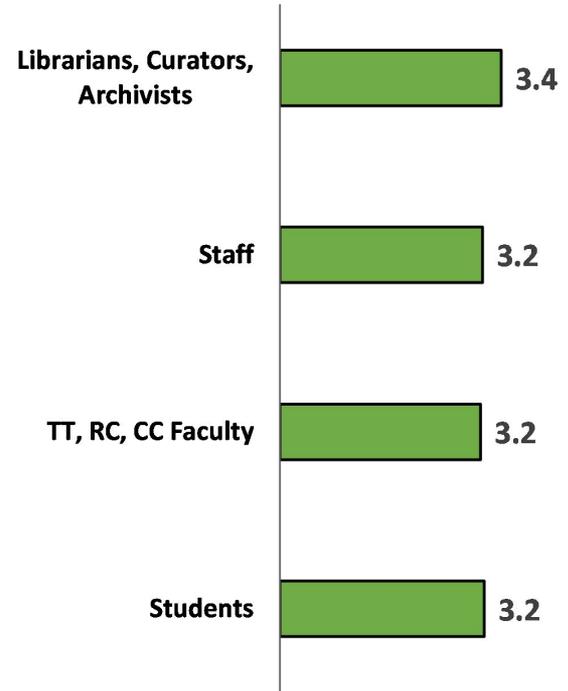
## Concern about Library



## Concern about U-M



## Concern about Internet Co.



# 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 responsively. 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.)*

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

- 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

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- 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

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- 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!

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**Link to survey instrument:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1di-se8rr5-YCaRNQYtMliZ9xcgnKEjUn/view?usp=sharing>