

FINDABLE DATA Designing a Digital Repository for Library Assessment

GOALS OF PROJECT

- Make key metrics more visible to Library staff through graphs and dashboards
- Improve access to the Library's assessment data via secure web environment
- Model process of continuous improvement through usability testing and metrics tracking

METHODOLOGY

The Library's migration to Microsoft's SharePoint collaboration software provided an opportunity to assess the usage and usability of our Library Statistics digital repository. The repository consists of dashboards, data sets, summaries of research and assessment project reports. The repository supports data-driven decision making across the Library's activities and services. The original project plan included six components:

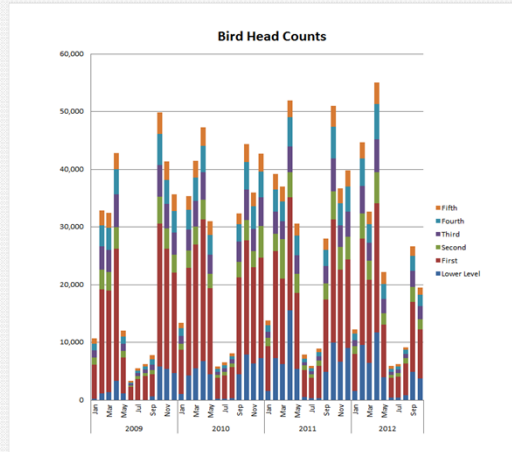
1. Determine the technical requirements for the system
2. Define structured metadata elements to optimize search and navigation
3. Monitor site usage through metrics
4. Conduct usability testing with end users
5. Implement changes to the system
6. Assess training needs for end users

USABILITY TESTING

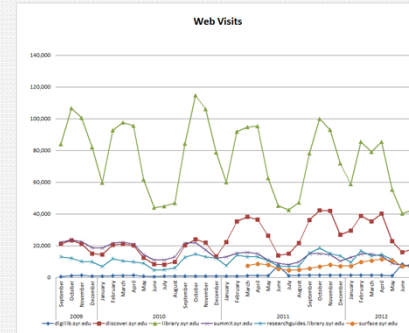
Our user testing was informal. We asked key stakeholders (library staff) to explore the database by searching for answers to common questions asked of the Assessment Unit.

- What are the top journals borrowed through interlibrary loan?
- What hours and days of the week is the library busiest, in terms of how many people are in the building?
- Is there a correlation between service desk use and how many users are in the library building?
- What are the trends in the increase of costs for electronic resources?
- What is the rate of growth in the collections by LC Classification?

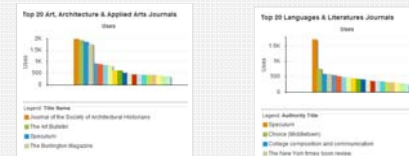
DASHBOARDS



Trend in library building use by month, year and floor. Updated daily with web form.

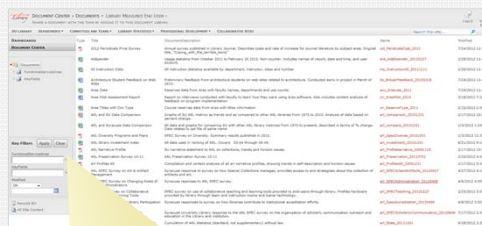


Library web site traffic, updated monthly via Google Analytics.



Journal usage by subject area, updated twice per year via Serials Solutions' 360 Counter.

DOCUMENT CENTER

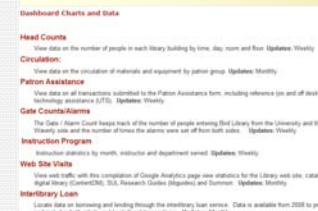


Document repository with structured metadata scheme for filtering results

USER GUIDE



User guide for data repository and contact information for additional help



FINDINGS

Users have different needs for data, such as:

- Reporting of personal activity
- Operational/management decision-making on staffing and building use and collections
- Library strategic planning
- Reporting to University administration
- External reporting (e.g. ARL., NCES)

Users search differently

- Expectations of data organization are different
- Users' knowledge of repository contents and structure makes a difference in how users search.

Users want to interact with data in different ways

- View print charts and data summaries
- View and interact with online dashboards
- Download data and customize analysis

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- The repository must support different levels of use, from self-explanatory dashboards to downloadable excel files.
- Libraries must provide multiple pathways to make assessment data accessible.
- Multiple systems may be required to gather and present data
- The best repository systems will be flexible and support discovery, repurposing, and dissemination of data.
- A successful assessment data repository requires continuous cultivation and improvement.

LESSONS

- Many aspects of web site are not configurable, so usability may be constrained by system limitations.
- Site visit metrics are of limited use in measuring success if users must retrieve documents by visiting the site.
- Maintaining an easy-to-use and authoritative repository for un-mediated access to complex data is not easy.
- Making data available is only the first step in creating a true library culture of assessment.