



# Archival Metrics

*Promoting a Culture of Assessment in Archives and Special Collections*

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## Archival Metrics: Purpose and Goals

Innovative archivists, manuscript curators, and records managers want to know the answers to these questions:

- How effectively does this repository support our users' research needs?
- Are we learning as an organization by using data collected about the use of our collections to drive program improvement?
- Can we demonstrate our effectiveness in support of our unit's goals?

There are two drivers for these questions: first, an internal quest for improvement in services to researchers; and second, a need to provide accountability to resource providers, including the public, administrators of parent organizations, elected officials, and grant-makers. Archivists and records managers who pursue excellent programs and services know that they must gather data to document their progress toward their goals. These same data also aid funders, who need to make the best use of scarce resources, and want to support organizations that measurably support the delivery of good services to the public and members and administrators of their institutions.

Our project seeks to promote a culture of assessment in the archival domain by creating standardized user-based evaluation tools and other performance measures. By centralizing the development of these tools we help archivists and records managers overcome impediments to implementing assessment and improvement programs. Some managers, for example, may not undertake evaluation activities because of heavy existing workloads and lack of expertise. Our project has shouldered the research



# Archival Metrics Toolkits

- **Evaluation**
  - “A systematic process for ascertaining whether and why an object of study meets the goals envisioned for that object” (Gary Marchionini)
- **Academics tend to use the term “evaluation”**
- **Administrators in higher education and libraries use the term “assessment” when thinking about their programs**



# Evaluation vs. User Studies

- **User studies seek understanding of generalizable phenomena**
- **Evaluation focuses on a specific process, system, object, or individual**
- **Same methodologies, same approaches and analysis, different focus of study**



# User-Based Evaluation

- **Tells us how users view our constellation of services, service delivery, and resources, such as collections.**
- **Is not collection-based but user-centric.**
- **Can tell us about fulfillment of needs as well as user satisfaction.**



# Creating a Culture of Assessment

- **User-based evaluation needs to be based on concepts that are specific to archives and special collections**
- **If archivists do not do this for themselves, someone else will**
- **Archival Metrics Toolkits developed by and for archivists**
  - **Collaboration between researchers and practitioners**



# Archival Metrics

- Dr. Elizabeth Yakel, University of Michigan
- Dr. Helen Tibbo, University of North Carolina
- Drs. Wendy Duff, University of Toronto
  
- *Toward the Development of Archival Metrics in College and University Archives and Special Collections*
  - Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
  
- **Archival Metrics for Government Archives**
  - National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) 2-year grant 1/1/09 – 12/31/10.
  
- **Archival Metrics**
  - <http://archivalmetrics.org>



# College and University Extended Team

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- Laura Clark Brown, North Carolina
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- Mike Moir, York
- Fritz Pannekoek  
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# **Government Archivists Extended Team**

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- **Karen Teeple, Toronto**
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- **Kaye Minchew, Troupe Co.**





# Today's talk

- **Archival Metrics Toolkits**
  - **Overview**
  - **Development**
  - **Testing**
  - **Discussion of how findings from the questionnaires can help archives and special collections**
  - **Current use**
- **Convince you to use these tools**



# Archival Metrics Toolkits

- **Researcher**
- **Archival Websites**
- **Online Finding Aids**
- **Student Researcher**
- **Teaching Support**



# Archival Metrics Toolkits

- 1. Questionnaire Word document**
  - 1. PDF**
  - 2. Can transfer Survey Monkey version to other Survey Monkey accounts**
- 2. Administering the Survey**
- 3. Preparing your data for analysis**
- 4. Excel spreadsheet pre-formatted for data from the Questionnaire**
- 5. Pre-coded questionnaire**
- 6. SPSS file pre-formatted for data from the Website Questionnaire**
- 7. Sample report**



# Researcher

- **Designed to be used with on-site researchers**
- **Administered after the patron has received archival / special collections materials**
- **Complete at the repository**
- **Paper-based**



# Archival Websites

- **Designed for visitors using the archives website(s) to evaluate it**
- **Full questionnaire to respondents who have used the FA in the last 3 months**
- **Online questionnaire**



# Online Finding Aids

- **Designed for visitors using online finding aids to evaluate these tools**
- **Full questionnaire to respondents who have used the FA in the last 3 months**
- **Does not apply only to EAD finding aids**
- **Can be used with any finding aids database or discrete html listing**
- **Online questionnaire**



# Student Researcher

- **Use with students who have done an orientation at the special collections or archives**
- **Paper-based instrument for use in class**
- **End of term**



# Teaching Support

- **Instructors who have used the archives / special collections in their class**
- **Does not have to involve an assignment**
- **Online questionnaire**
- **End of term evaluation**





# Assessment of Need

- **Archives and special collections lacked standard user-based evaluation questionnaires**
- **Few models in the literature**
- **Few published reports of surveys**
- **Nothing about research design and sampling**
  - **E.g., Generating good enough response rates on which to base decisions**



# Developing the Archival Metrics Toolkits

- **Analysis of other survey instruments**
- **Review of the literature**
- **Interviews with archivists, faculty, students to identify core concepts for evaluation**
- **Conceptual Framework**
- **Creation of the questionnaires**
- **Testing the questionnaires, survey administration procedures, and the instructions analysis**



# Analysis of Other Instruments

- **Instruments analyzed (selected)**
  - **LibQual+**
  - **E-metrics (Charles McClure and David Lankes, Florida State University)**
  - **WebQual**
  - **WAMMI**
- **Definitions**
- **Question phraseology**



# Example: LibQual+

- **Focus on the gap between expectations or assumed quality of service and the actual service received**
- **Relies heavily on expectations and the assumption is that these have some basis in reality**
- **Initial testing of the Metrics questionnaires revealed problems with archives/special collections users and expectations**



# Example: WebQual

- **Focus solely on usability**
- **No questions on the context of the information need or the person**
- **We decided that context was important for analyzing the results**



# Literature Review

- **User studies**
- **Usability studies**
- **Website analyses**
- **Evaluation**
- **Impact**
- **Survey design**



# Interviews

- **Develop concepts for evaluation**
- **Identify areas of greatest concern**
- **Understand the feasibility of deploying surveys using different methods**
- **Interviewees**
  - **Archivists**
  - **Researchers / Instructors**
  - **Undergraduate and graduate students**



# Interviews: Availability (1)

- **Archivist:** This is a very big place and people are busy. If somebody doesn't stop you to ask you a question and you don't even see that they're there because they don't...we're actually thinking about finding some mechanism like a bell rings when somebody walks in the door because you get so focused on your computer screen that you don't even know somebody's there. We understand why they're a little intimidated. (MAM02, lines 403-408)





# Interviews: Availability (2)

- **Student: I've said this a million times, but the access to someone who is open to helping. So not just someone who is supposed to be doing it, but who actually wants to. (MSM02, lines 559-561)**
- **Professor: And they'll even do it after hours, almost every one of them. In fact they'd rather do it after hours because they don't have a crush of business in there. (MPM04, lines 320-322)**



# E-Metrics Definition

- **Accessibility of Service** is a measure of how easily potential users are able to avail themselves of the service and includes (but is certainly not limited to) such factors as: **availability (both time and day of the week); site design (simplicity of interface); ADA compliance; ease of use; placement in website hierarchy if using web submission form or email link from the website; use of metatags for digital reference websites (indexed in major search tools, etc.); or multilingual capabilities in both interface and staff, if warranted based on target population (E-Metrics)**



# Concept of Availability

- **Two different concepts**
  - **Approachability (Quality of the interaction)**
  - **Hours (Facility/Information Space)**



# Testing of the tools

- **Iterative design and initial user (researchers, instructors, students, and archivists) feedback**
- **Stage 1: Iterative testing and deployment with cognitive interviewing**
- **Stage 2: Larger scale testing of questionnaires and administration procedures**



# Stage 1 Testing

- **Single archives / special collections**
  - **Cognitive interviewing: Walked people through the questionnaire**
  - **Post test interview**
    - **Clarity of questions**
    - **Length of instrument**
    - **Comprehensiveness of questions**
    - **Willingness to complete a questionnaire of this type**
- **Implementations of the questionnaires until the instruments were stable**



# Stage 1 Testing Outcomes

- **Lots of feedback on question wording**
  - **Decision to include a definition of finding aids**
- **Decision not to pursue a question bank approach**
- **Move away from expectation questions**
- **Decisions about how to administer the surveys**
  - **On-site researcher and student researcher surveys became paper-based**
  - **Online finding aids and website survey - online**



# Stage 1 Testing

<b>Questionnaire</b>	<b>Total tests</b>	<b>Nature of the test</b>
<b>Researcher</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Questionnaire/ Interviewing</b>
<b>Student Researcher</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Questionnaire/ Interviewing</b>
<b>Online Finding Aids</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Focus group/ Interviewing</b>
<b>Website</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Focus group/ Interviewing</b>
<b>Teaching Support</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Questionnaire/ Interviewing</b>



# Stage 2 Testing

<b>Toolkit</b>	<b>Number of Tests</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>
<b>Researcher</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Student Researcher</b>	<b>11 (classes)</b>	<b>452</b>
<b>Online Finding Aids</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>198</b>
<b>Website</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Teaching Support</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>20</b>





# Stage 2 Testing

- **Administration Procedures**
  - **Timing of the administration**
  - **Sampling techniques**
  - **Response rates**



# Timing

- **Researcher**
  - **When to administer?**
  - **During visit**
  - **Problematic due to archival procedures**
- **Student**
  - **End of term**
  - **Need instructor cooperation**
  - **Early email with online survey link had a poor response rate**



# Administration of the Web-based Tools

- **Email to recent on-site researchers**
- **Rolling invitations immediately after a response to an email reference question\***
- **Retrospective invitations to email reference requestors**
- **Across all the surveys tested, we received an average response rate of 65%.**



# Rolling Email Reference Requests

Archives	Survey	Number of email reference requests	Days for accumulation
B	Finding Aids	52	81
C	Finding Aids	36	65
E	Website	50	64



# **Administration Recommendations**

- **Survey both onsite researchers and remote reference requestors**
- **Email reference and on-site researchers represent two different populations**
  - **Only 4 of the 64 email reference requestors who responded to the online finding aids survey had visited the repository**
- **Few email reference requestors had visited the repository in person**



# Differences in Samples in Test B

Last accessed finding aids	B (In-house Researchers) % (n=22)	B (Email Reference) % (n=24)
Less than a day	9.1%	12.5%
Less than a week	4.5%	16.7%
Less than a month	31.8%	33.3%
Less than six months	27.3%	0.0%
Less than one year	4.5%	0.0%
More than one year	0.0%	0.0%
I have never accessed your online finding aids	22.7%	37.5%



# Administration Instructions

- **How the questionnaires can and cannot be amended**
- **Identifying a survey population**
- **Sampling strategies**
- **Soliciting subjects**
- **Applying to their university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) or ethics panel.**



# Analysis Instructions

- **Instructions**
- **Preformatted Excel spreadsheet**
  - **Codebook**
- **Preformatted SPSS file**





# Who is Using the Toolkits

- **Since April 2008**
  - 600+ downloads
  - 200+ people
- **March – May 2009 Survey**
  - 33% response rate
  - 61 people



# Survey respondents (n=47)

- **Archivist / Manuscript Curator – 83.7% (41)**
- **Other – 24% (12)**
- **Faculty – 6.1% (3)**
- **Student – 6.1% (3)**
- **Consultant – 4.1%<sup>2</sup>**



# Why download?

- **We were conducting usability testing and wanted to use the questionnaires available in the toolkit as a jumping off point to formulate our own pre-test survey**
- **I wanted a quick presentation evaluation form to use with a class that was coming and to give me some feedback for use in my tenure dossier**



# Archival Metrics Toolkits

- **Researcher Toolkit – 52.2% (24)**
- **Online Finding Aids Toolkit – 43.5% (20)**
- **Website Toolkit – 41.3% (19)**
- **Student Researcher Toolkit – 32.6% (15)**
- **Teaching Support Toolkit – 23.9 (11)**



# Use

- **22% used the toolkits**
- **Researcher Toolkit – 41.7% (5)**
- **Online Finding Aids Toolkit – 33.3% (4)**
- **Website Toolkit – 41.7% (5)**
- **Student Researcher Toolkit – 25.0% (3)**
- **Teaching Support Toolkit – 8.3% (1)**



# How Are the Toolkits Used?

- **We were able to take several of the questions to flesh out part of our survey**
- **I wanted students to evaluate not just one, but a sequence of classes, I modified the survey a lot for my needs. I found the questions really helpful -- several I never would have thought to ask!**
- **The toolkits were easy to use and the information gathered has been extremely useful.**



# Archival Metrics Toolkits

- **Free and available for download**
  - **Creative Commons License**
- **Must ‘register’ but this information will not be shared**
- **We will be doing our own user-based evaluation of their use**
- **<http://archivalmetrics.org>**



**Thank-you**

**and**

**Questions**