Can Numbers Tell The Story?

Statistics and Metrics Working Group
Depository Library Council

Members of SMWG

Sarah Erekson, chair, Univ of Florida
Angela Bonnell, Illinois State Univ
Susanne Caro, New Mexico State Library
Cynthia Etkin, DFO, Superintendent of Documents Office
Joshua Finnell, Colgate University
Stephen Kharfen, Metadata & Collection Services
Ben Petersen, Chief, Projects & Systems, LSCM
Kate Pitcher, Chief, Federal Depository Support Services, LSCM
Stephani (Nia) Rodgers, Virginia Commonwealth University
Gwen Sinclair, University of Hawai'i at Manoa

SMWG Purpose

The purpose of the SMWG is to research, to report on, and to recommend options for how GPO can collect usage statistics from depository libraries for digital and tangible Government information products. Further, the Working Group is to study and report on the broader landscape of library data gathering trends and recommend possible programmatic library-related performance indicators.

Federal Depository Library Usage Statistics Survey

- Sent to Depository Library Coordinators
- Survey Aug. 8 – Sept. 16, 2024
- 6 questions and a free text box
- 345 responses out of 1,101 depository libraries
(31% response rate)

Systematic Barriers to Data Collection

BARRIER	NUMBER	PERCENT
Time constraints	160	44
Difficult to extract data from systems	124	34
Training for personnel is needed	114	31
Collection is not cataloged	95	26
Lack of experience with data gathering	93	26
PURL usage reports issues	47	13
Other	61	18

Systematic Barriers: Time

Libraries face constraints in time

- Too many jobs/responsibilities

- Unexpected amounts of data (too much or too little)

- Difficulty downloading / requesting analytics

Systematic Barriers: Data Extraction

Pulling FDLP usage data:

- Often done by IT or someone else

- May have inconsistencies (needs cleaning before processing)

- Not easy to segregate FDLP materials from the rest of the library's data

- Difficult to interpret

Systematic Barriers: Personnel

The bodies in the libraries

- FDLP coordination: a one person operation

- Low priority for others

- Volunteer or student work restrictions

Systematic Barriers: Lack of Experience

This wasn't taught in library school:

- New to documents
- New to data extraction
- Skills training

Systematic Barriers: Uncataloged Materials

Challenges

- Lack of item-level cataloging prevents automated reports

- No procedures in place to track materials used

- Mix of uncataloged and cataloged and circulating and non-circulating creates complications in tracking

When the Tangible Collection is Uncataloged

What to count?

- Elements relevant to the needs of the library (formats and location)

- Elements sustainable over time with limited staffing levels

How to count?

- Create a simple log or spreadsheet, or borrow a template
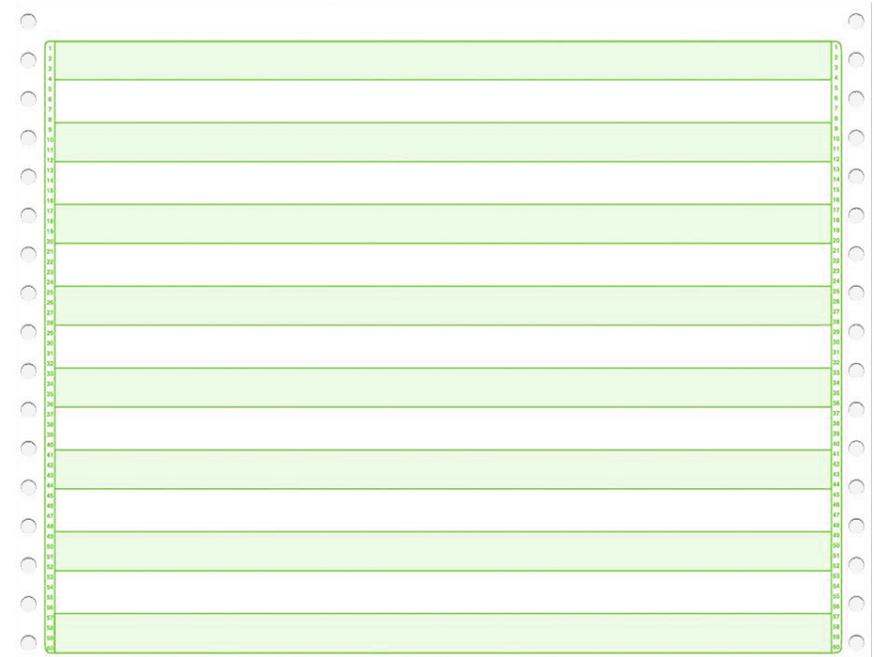
How to Count

Determine the basic elements to track

- Unique identifier, like a call number
- Date the item was used
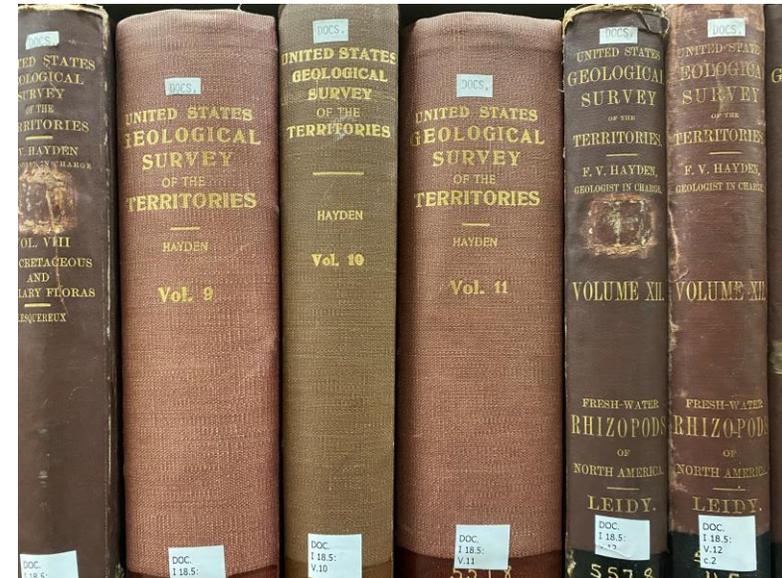
Other potential elements to track:

- Title
- Publication date
- Format (paper, microfiche, map, electronic)
- Language
- Location in the library (reference, stacks, storage)
- In-library or circulating use

Value in tracking:

- Administration
- Circulation/Access Services
- Collection Maintenance
- Instruction
- Preservation
- Stack Maintenance

PURL Tracking

PURL Usage or (PURL Referral) Reports
- Track clicks to electronic government information originating from an institution's links

Setting the system up requires
- IP addresses used by the institution
- Domain patterns (possible URLs)
  - University of Florida registered 6 Hostname / IP addresses

Showing Value of Usage Data Collection

What can we do with the numbers?

Will the numbers betray us?

Is popularity as important as breadth and depth in the collection?

Hidden collections now the "lacunae" (missing portion)

Q&A

Thank you!