

Is there a better way? Collating print usage statistics

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The biggest challenge facing me in my current job is collating usage for print journals. In an ideal world there would be a mechanism in place to provide print usage in a consistent way (similar to COUNTER) which allows institutions to gather this data.

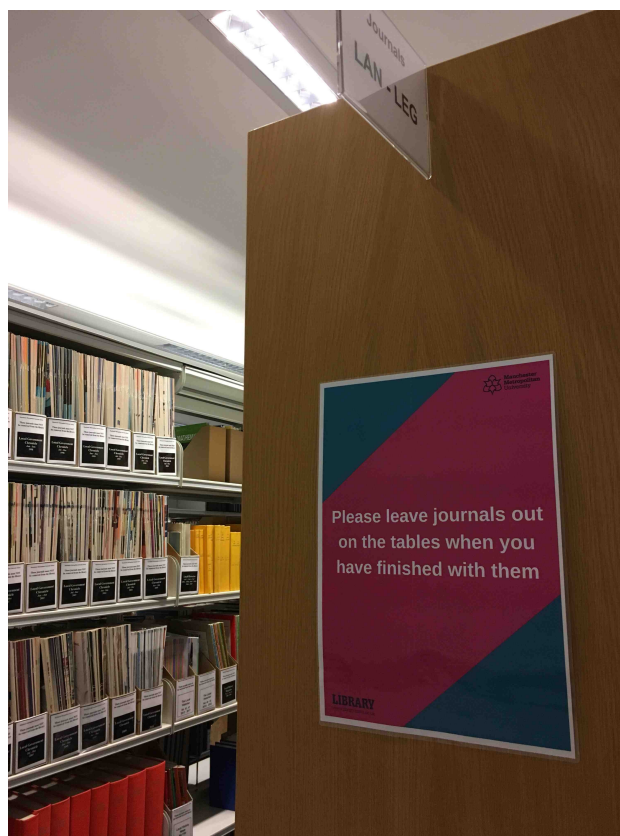
My university library's collection includes over 3,000 print journal titles, over 22,000 electronic journal titles and over 1,400 journal subscriptions. Systematic monitoring and evaluation of data enables libraries to respond to the changing needs and demands of their users, and to demonstrate their support of departmental and institutional accreditation standards. Furthermore, with price increases to subscriptions and reductions to budgets, evaluation of resources is needed to ensure that our collection is fit for purpose; meaning that resources are relevant, accessible, representative of all subject areas and that they provide good value for money.

Therefore, to prepare for the annual renewals exercise (where we decide which resources to purchase or cancel) I collate data (usage of and subject-coded analysis of print titles) for subject librarians, from which stock collection policies can be applied. The same process is also conducted for our e-resources; however, this is much simpler as use is automatically recorded every time a user accesses the resource in some form or another (eg download, views etc).

As indicated above, systematic monitoring enables libraries to respond to the changing needs and demands of their users. Libraries are becoming learning centres, providing more space for customers and less for stacks. The change in information-seeking habits means that students need spaces for studying and group work. Space constraint is associated mostly with print journals. Whereas online journals do not show any physical space constraints, a print collection including years of back issues can take up a huge amount of space and yield relatively little use. Therefore, it makes sense to withdraw/cancel these titles or replace with e-only content. The comparison of print and electronic journal usage allows the library to make informed decisions.

Thus, another reason for monitoring print usage is connected to space in order to identify titles that are not used and therefore are subject to evaluation in terms of collection management in order to create much needed space.

As our print journals are reference only they do not generate circulation statistics. Therefore, we use shelving data (asking users to leave journals out on tables) as an indicator of usage; a method used by other libraries.



Whilst at this year's UKSG conference I conducted some informal research, asking other librarians about how they monitor their print journal usage; the responses received were that they use the same process as us: using shelving data. As I will also be attending the NASIG conference, I intend to repeat the process there and may even extend this to some of the JISC lists. Additionally, I have submitted this to the NASIG Program Planning Committee (PPC) as a topic for volunteer discussion in the hope that best practice can be shared.

Our current process of collating print journal usage is time consuming and does not provide an accurate reflection (eg if a user re-shelves the issue). Although there are tools available which make this easier for electronic journals (eg SUSHI), there is not much available for print journals, which are therefore, more difficult to measure. I attended a number of sessions at this year's UKSG conference which focused on electronic usage, however, print is still a vital part of some collections, especially those with a big art and design focus, and therefore, it is important to ensure the same efforts applied to electronic titles are applied to print.

In an ideal world, I would address this by implementing software that would allow our users to scan the print journal (on their smartphone (using an app) or at designated scanners in the library) to indicate usage. This information would feed into an ERM system and enable us to run reports with all of our data (print usage, price of package, cost per usage, and subject area of title). I am aware that this process is fallible (users may not scan the journals); however, it would be an improvement on the current system and would save staff time as they would not need to go up to check if any items have been left out, record them and input them into a system.

As librarians and libraries are using infographic software to create outreach material and to share their research, the time saved with the implementation of the app would enable me to produce infographics to outline usage or lack of as usage statistics are valuable for marketing purposes. This is important because presenting data visually, rather than as a set of flat statistics (in our case spreadsheets), facilitates the recognition of patterns and relationships to communicate a message in a more compelling and interesting way. This method makes it possible to reveal links and relationships that are not obvious without deeper analysis of the available data.



In the meantime, we are hoping to improve visibility of our process and have redesigned the posters alerting our users to leave out any journals they have used and have put these on display stands and around the area the journals are kept. When time permits, I will spend more time working on producing infographics, for the reasons outlined above. However, currently, subject librarians can view usage/lack of usage through a spreadsheet I have created which covers the past three years (when monitoring print journal usage began) and includes pivot titles to allowing more granularity.

ID	Title	Date	Month
999	Detail	2017 09/05/2018	May
000	Detail	2017 09/05/2018	May
001	Detail	2017 09/05/2018	May
002	Detail	2018 09/05/2018	May
003	Detail	2018 09/05/2018	May
004	Country life	2018 09/05/2018	May
005	The Bookseller	2018 10/05/2018	May
006	Sight and sound	2018 10/05/2018	May
007	Cineaste	2018 10/05/2018	May
008	Peeref	2018 10/05/2018	May
009	Frieze	2018 10/05/2018	May
010	Music, sound and the moving image	2017 10/05/2018	May
011	C magazine	2018 10/05/2018	May
012	Good housekeeping	2018 10/05/2018	May
013	Accessori collezione	2018 10/05/2018	May
014	Accessori collezione	2018 10/05/2018	May
015	Crafts	2018 10/05/2018	May
016	Viewpoint	2018 10/05/2018	May
017	Selvedge	2018 10/05/2018	May
018	Creative review	2018 10/05/2018	May
019	Journal of black studies	2009 10/05/2018	May
020	The architectural review	2018 10/05/2018	May
021	Detail	2007 10/05/2018	May
022	Detail	2010 10/05/2018	May
023	Detail	2011 10/05/2018	May
024	Detail	2016 10/05/2018	May
025	art	2017 10/05/2018	May
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