Evaluation of the impact of library discovery technologies on usage of academic content

Presenters: Angela Conyers, Evidence Base (BCU)
Valérie Spezi, LISU (Loughborough University)

Loughborough University

Why this study?

- Commissioned by UKSG/Jisc in July 2013
  - Lots of interest in library discovery technologies
  - Questions about whether libraries, publishers and other stakeholders should be engaging with those technologies
  - Follows on from the UKSG research report on Link resolvers and the serials supply chain and the work of KBART
- Small-scale study
  - A UK perspective
- No previous usage data analyses – fill in the gap
  - 2 studies about to report shortly
- Work started in July 2013

Loughborough University

Objectives of the research

- Evaluation of the impact of library discovery technologies on usage of academic resources
- Provide evidence to determine if there is a case for
  - ✓ Investment in library discovery technologies by libraries
  - ✓ Engagement with library discovery technologies by publishers and other stakeholders in the information supply chain
- Provide recommendations for stakeholders to best support the discovery of academic resources
- Identify additional research, data, discussion and initiatives that will support the findings of the study

Methodology

- Phase 1: survey of UK HE libraries
  - Objective: determine the current RDS landscape
- Phase 2: case studies of libraries and publishers
  - Objective: collect usage data + views and perceptions on the impact of library discovery technologies
- Phase 3: interviews with stakeholders
  - Objective: obtain a bigger picture on the perceived impact of library discovery technologies and an insight of where the sector is going

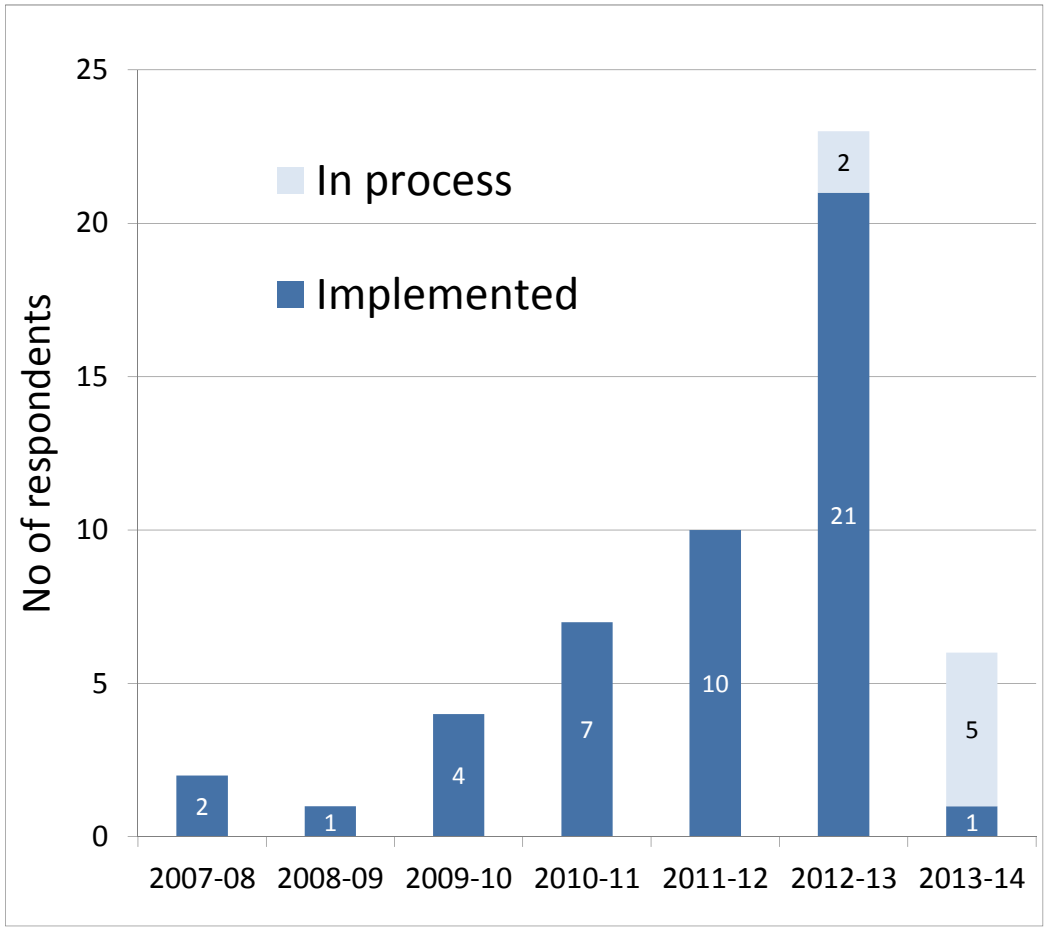
Methodology (cont'd)

- Survey: 62 respondents
  - ✓ Online questionnaire distributed to UK HE library directors
- 8 publishers and stakeholders
- 6 case study libraries
- Data received from 6 libraries & 4 publishers/content providers
  - ✓ COUNTER JR1, BR2 and DB1 or close equivalent

Loughborough University

Phase 1: UK RDS landscape

RDS use in academic libraries



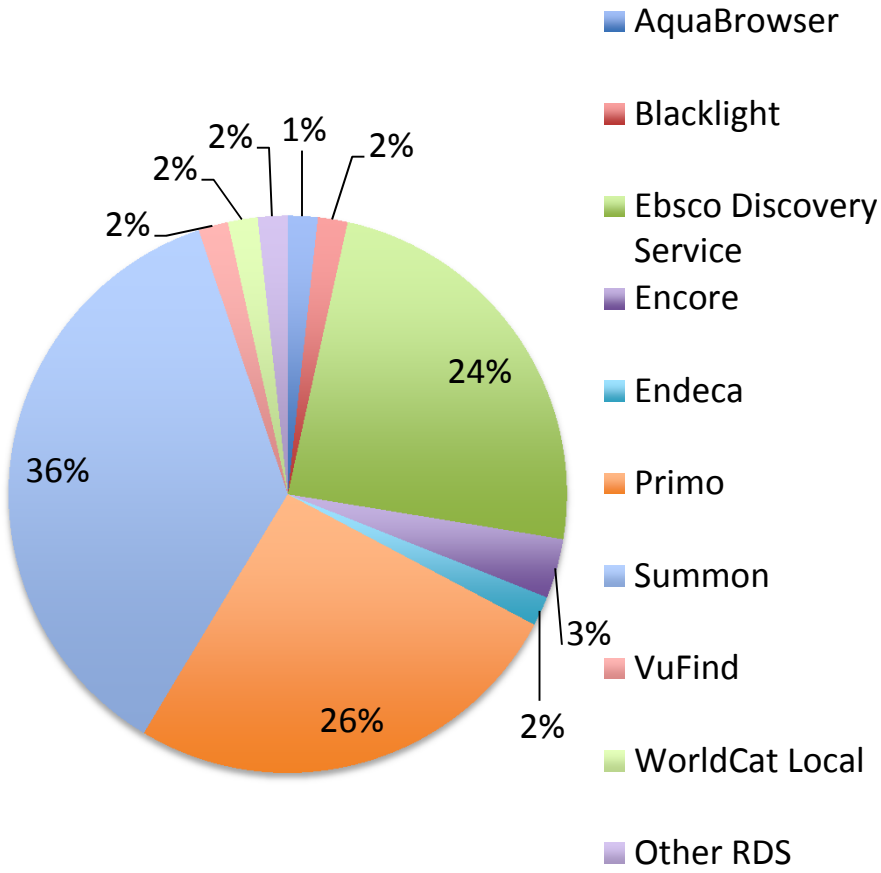
The UK HE landscape:

- **77%** of UK HE libraries are already using an RDS at their institution
- A further **11%** are in the process of implementing an RDS
- RDS implementation in HE libraries had probably reached its peak in the last 12 months

Loughborough University

Phase 1: UK RDS landscape

RDS products used by UK HE libraries



- 3 products dominate the library discovery market in our sample
- Half of the survey respondents considered the RDS to be a replacement for their previous OPAC, although there was an indication that online catalogues are still needed for some specific transactions

Loughborough University

Phase 2: usage study

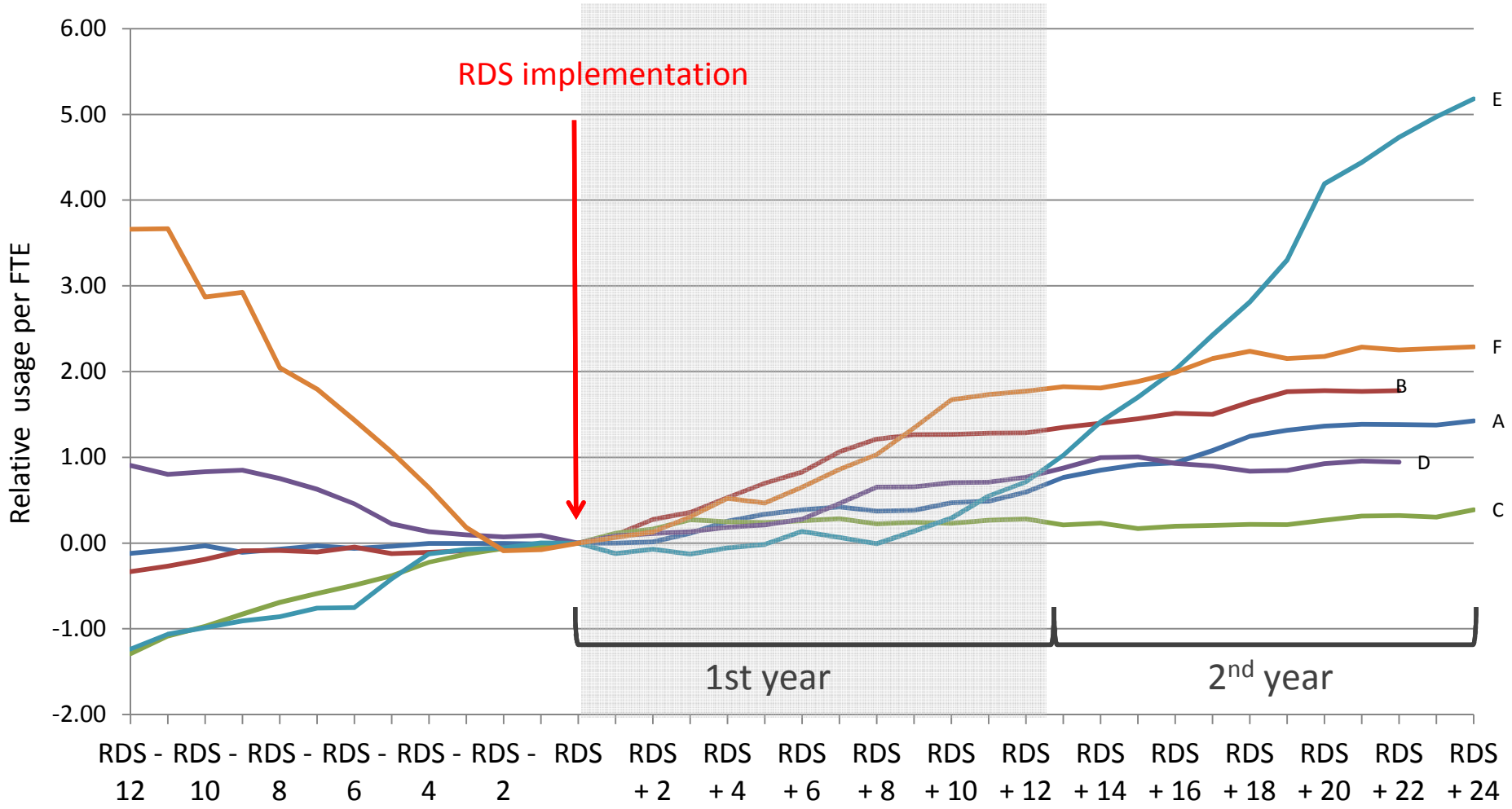
What are we going to present?

1. General findings – general picture
   - Data received from the 6 participating libraries and 4 of the participating publishers
     - Libraries' usage data – journal, e-book and database
     - Publishers' usage data – journal

2. Findings for a case study library – more detailed picture

VS2

Overall journal usage trends

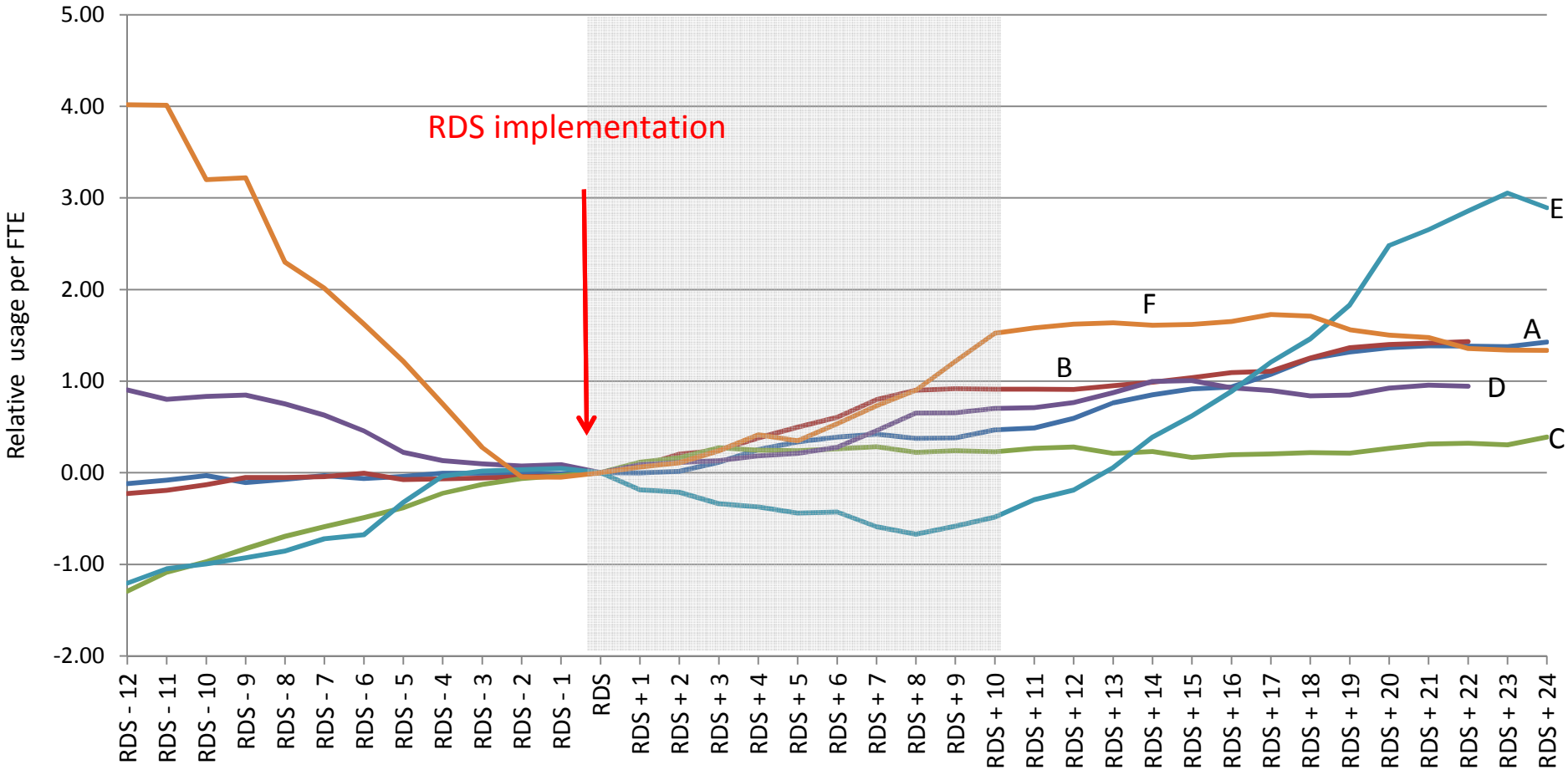


Loughborough University

Slide 9

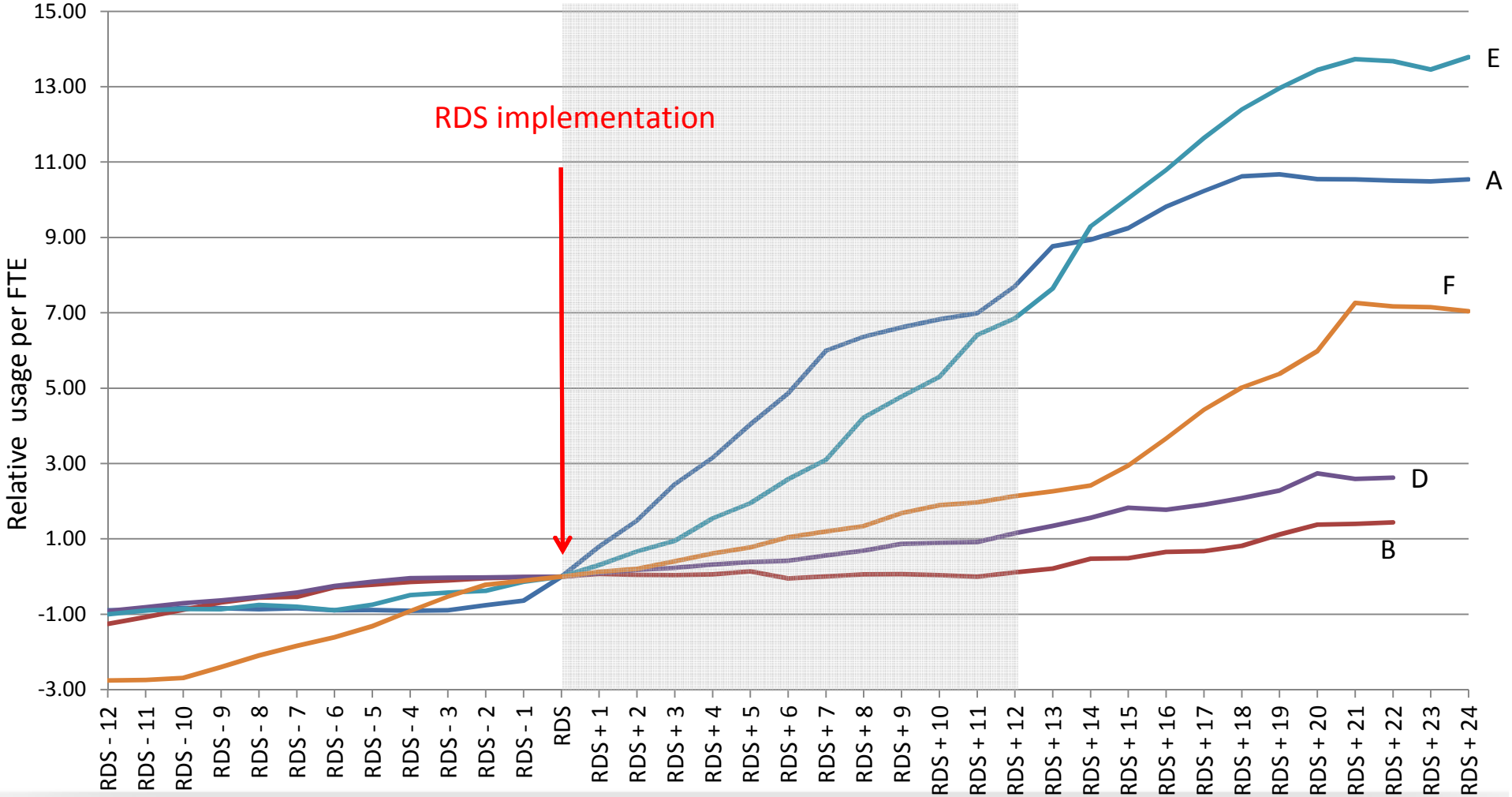
VS2 there may be a new graph - see Claire
Valérie, 05/11/2013

Overall journal usage trends – constant titles



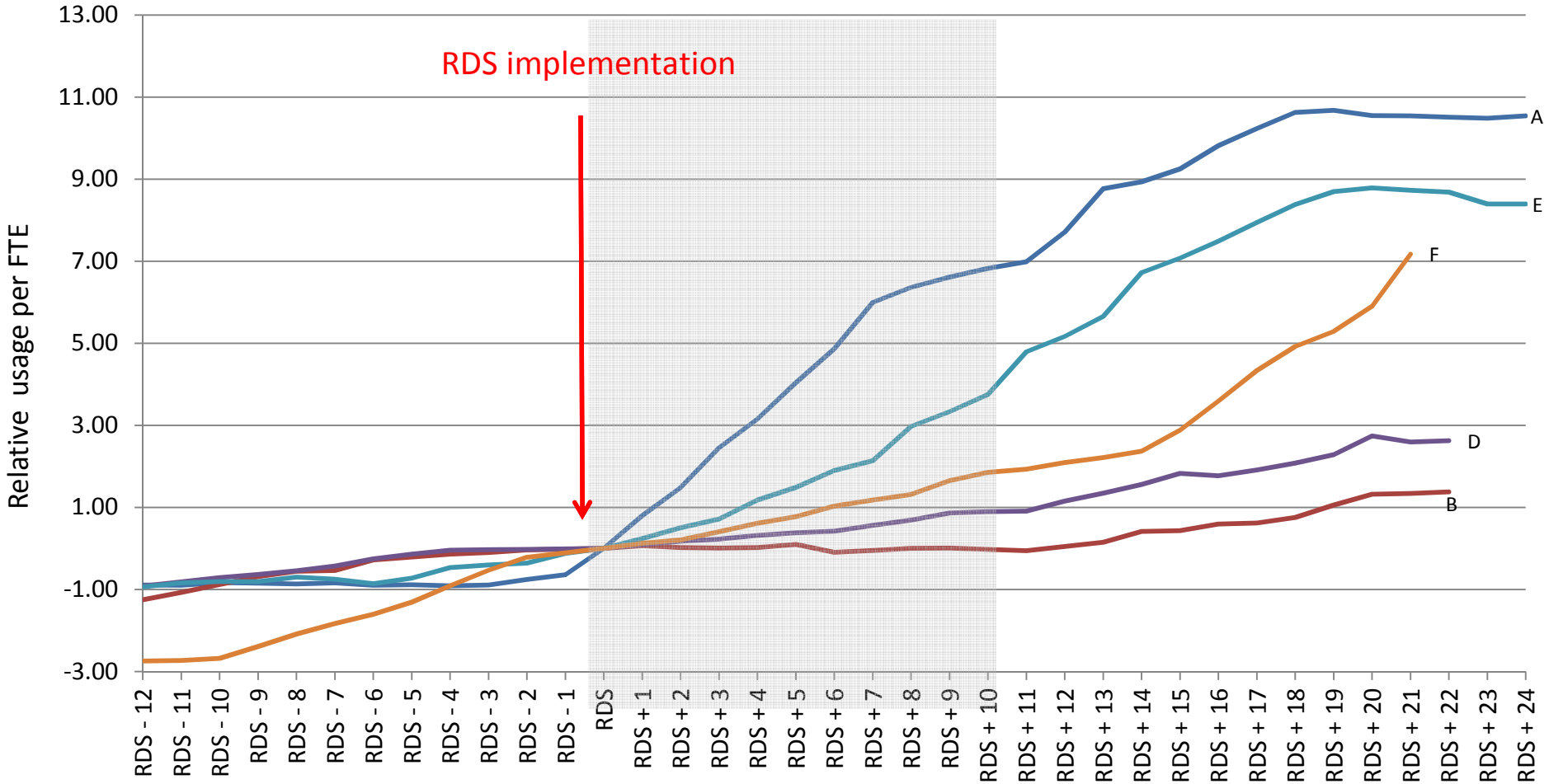
Loughborough University

Overall e-book usage trends



Loughborough University

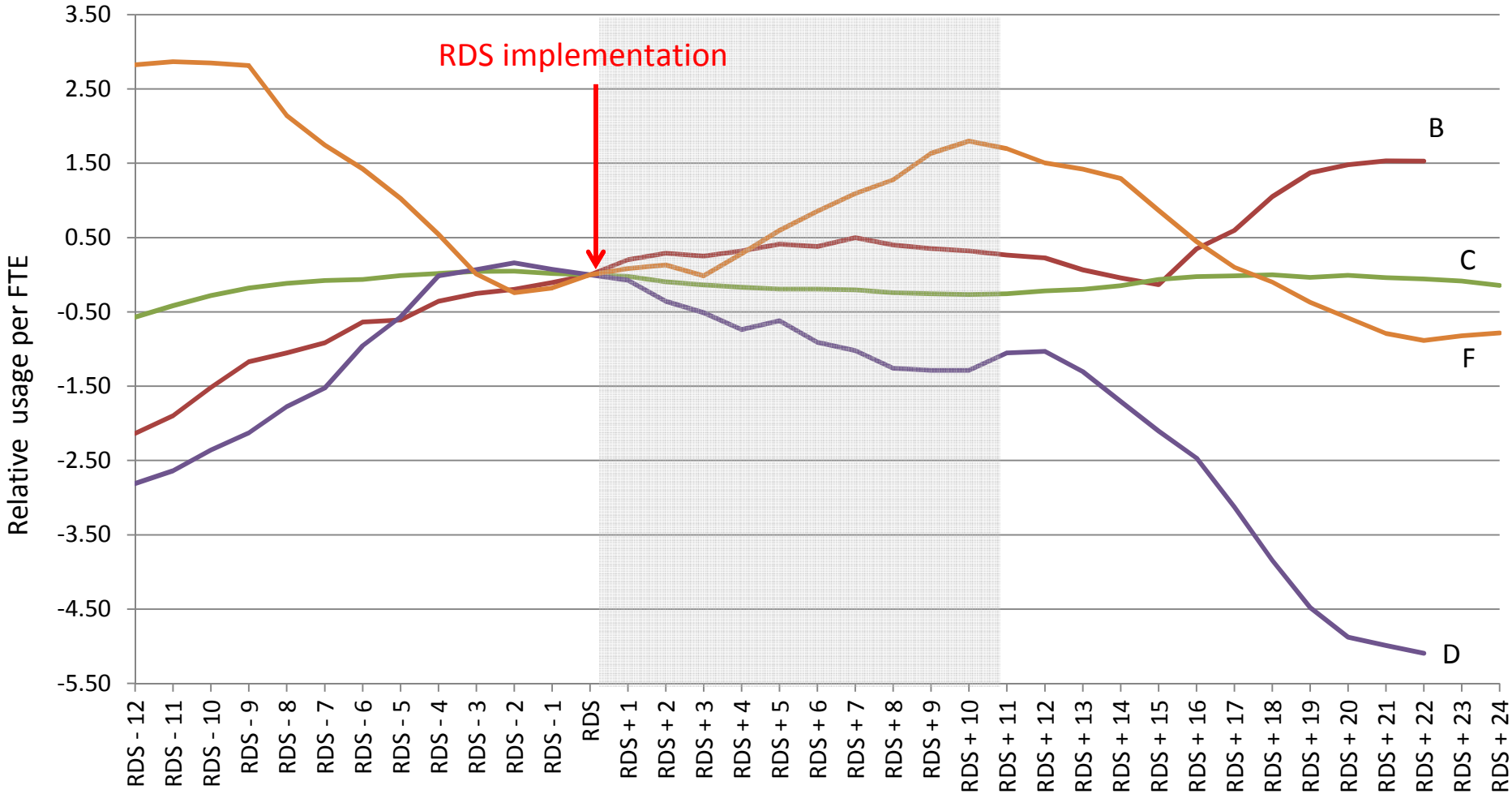
Overall e-book usage trends – constant titles



Loughborough University

VS3

Overall database usage trends

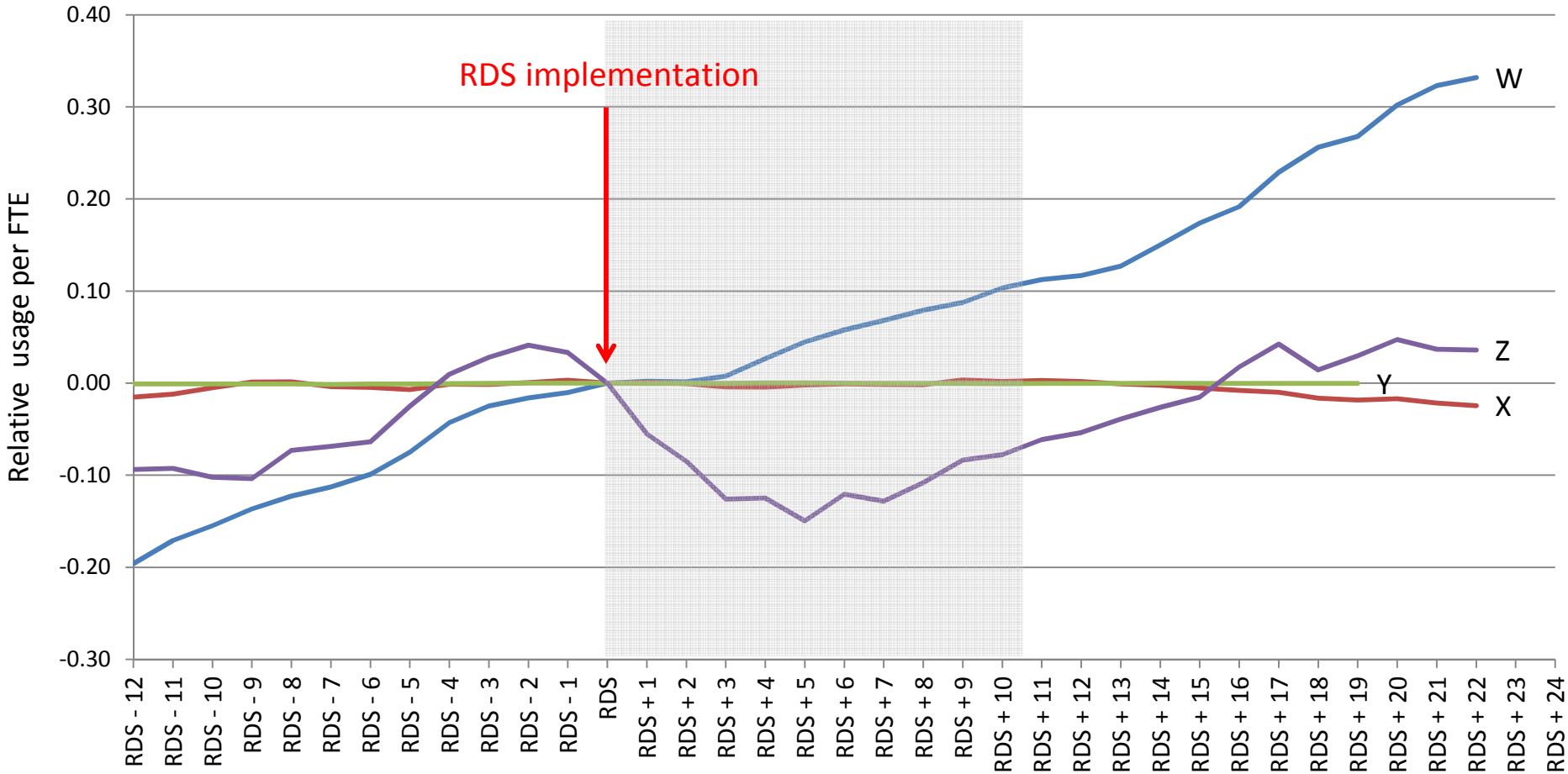


Loughborough University

Slide 13

VS3 check graph again with claire - ok for one library omitted but what about the other one missing?
Valérie, 05/11/2013

Publishers - overall journal trends

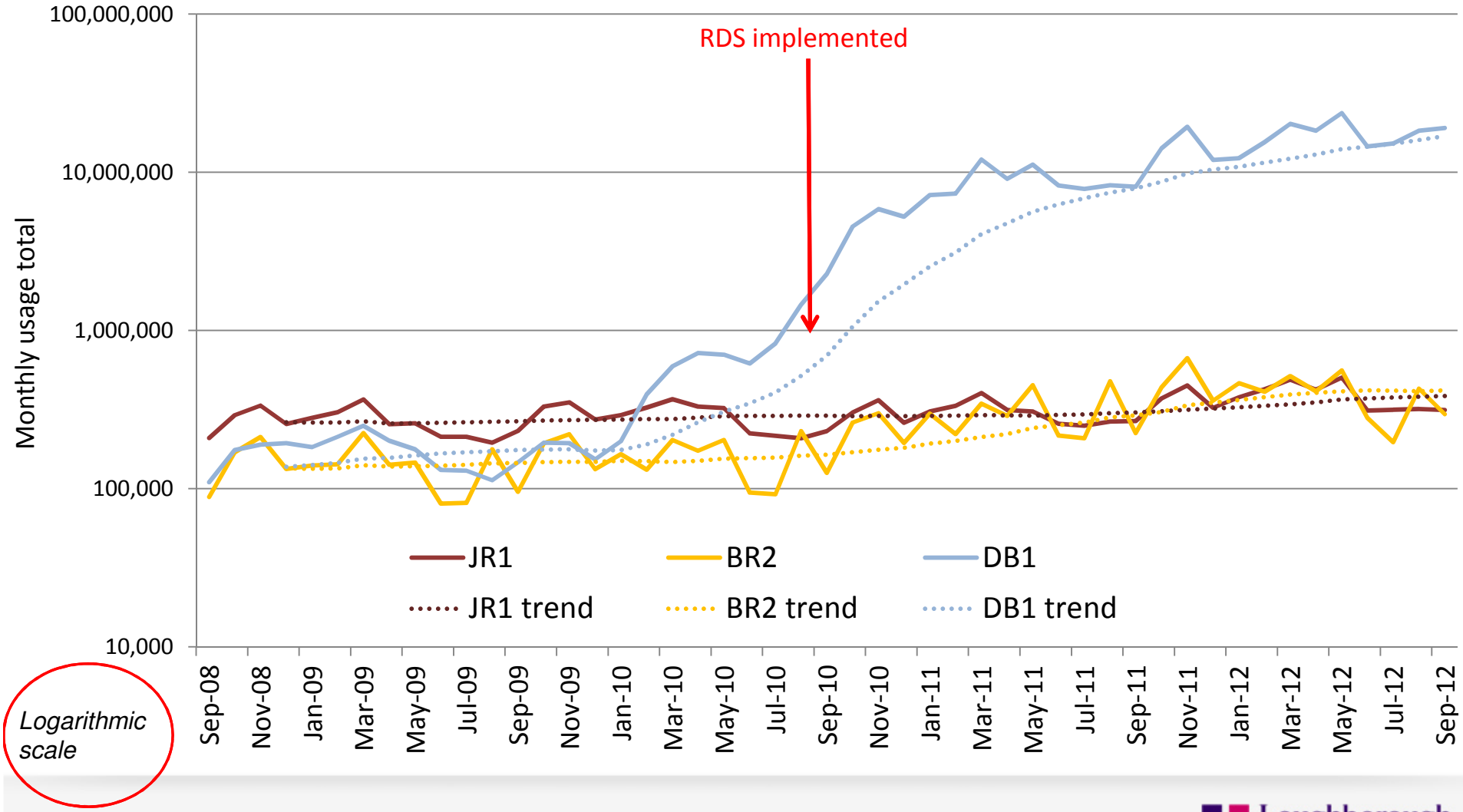


Loughborough University

Broad picture – key findings

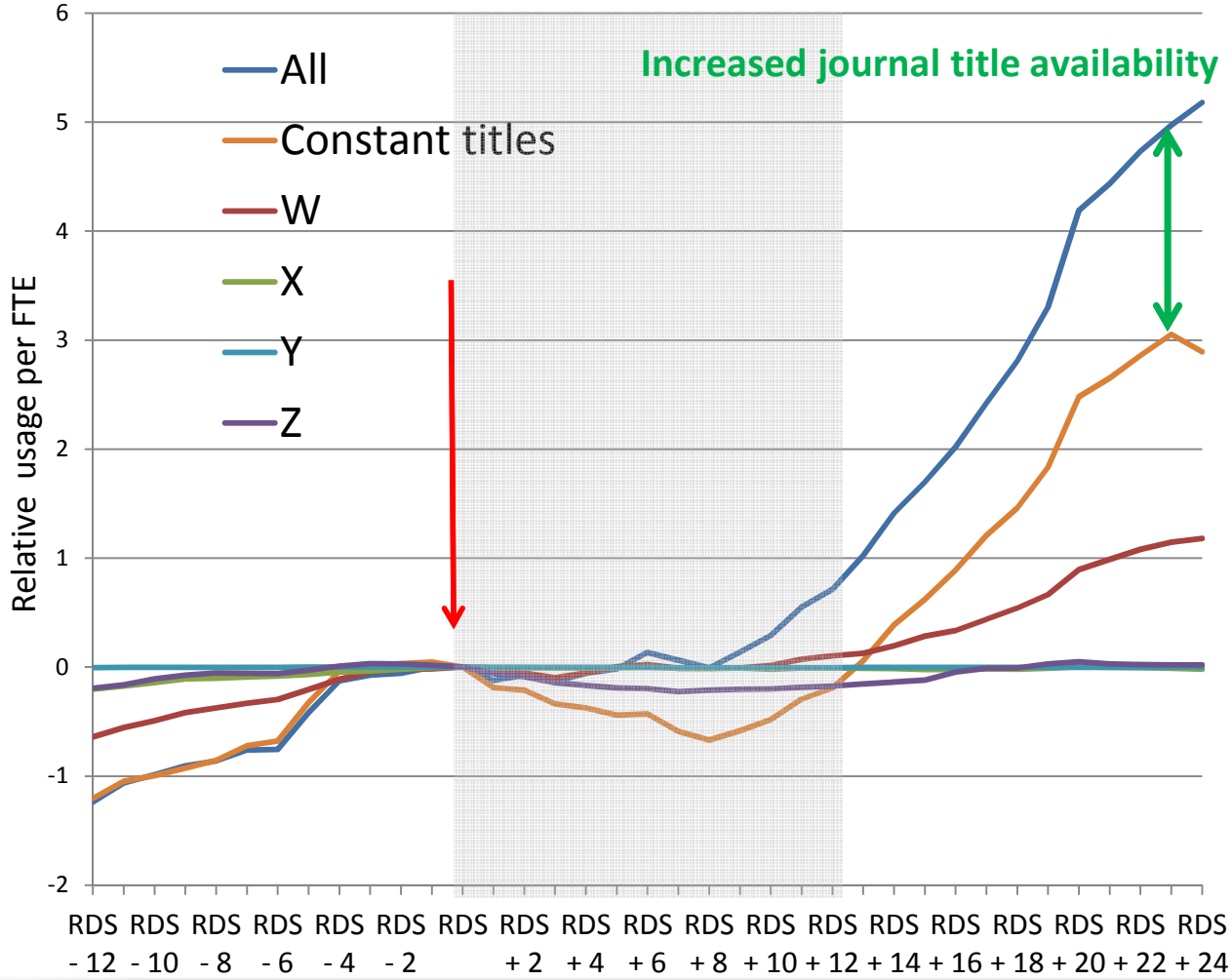
- What does the usage analysis suggest?
  - Journals – some impact
  - E-books – definitely a positive impact
  - Databases – cannot tell
- Interpretation of the aggregated data – challenge - why?
  - Multi-dimensional environment – lots of noise in the results
    - other factors may affect usage, notably the volume of content available
      - We've tried to control for this with the 'constant titles' but there may be other factors
  - No common pattern by type of resources for each library
    - Except for e-books maybe?
- Next: look at a case study library in greater detail

Overall time series for journals, eBooks and databases – data for a single case study library



Loughborough University

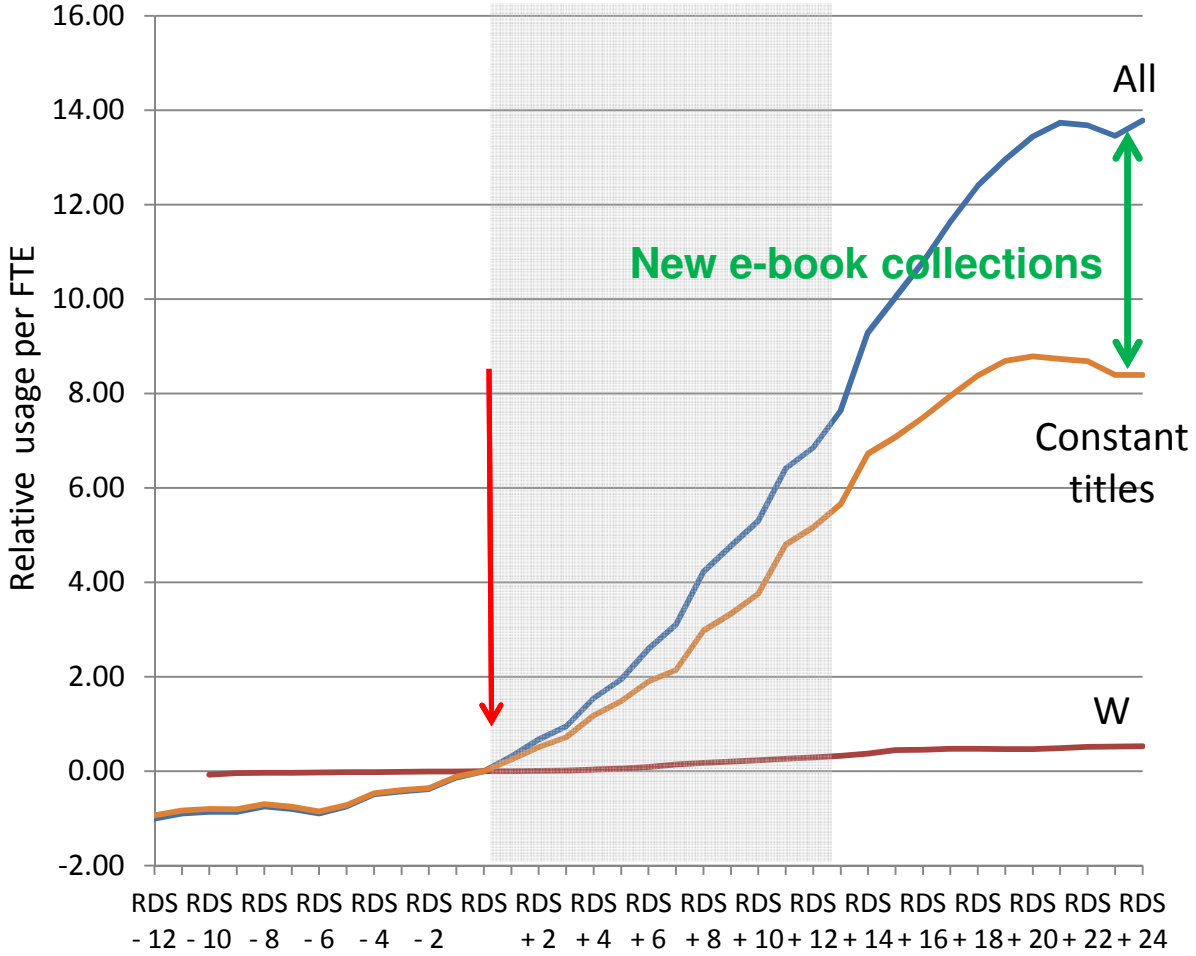
Journal usage per FTE for library E



- Journal usage levels increasing before RDS
- RDS effect on constant titles shows a decrease in usage level immediately after implementation and then a sustained increase at a higher pace

Loughborough University

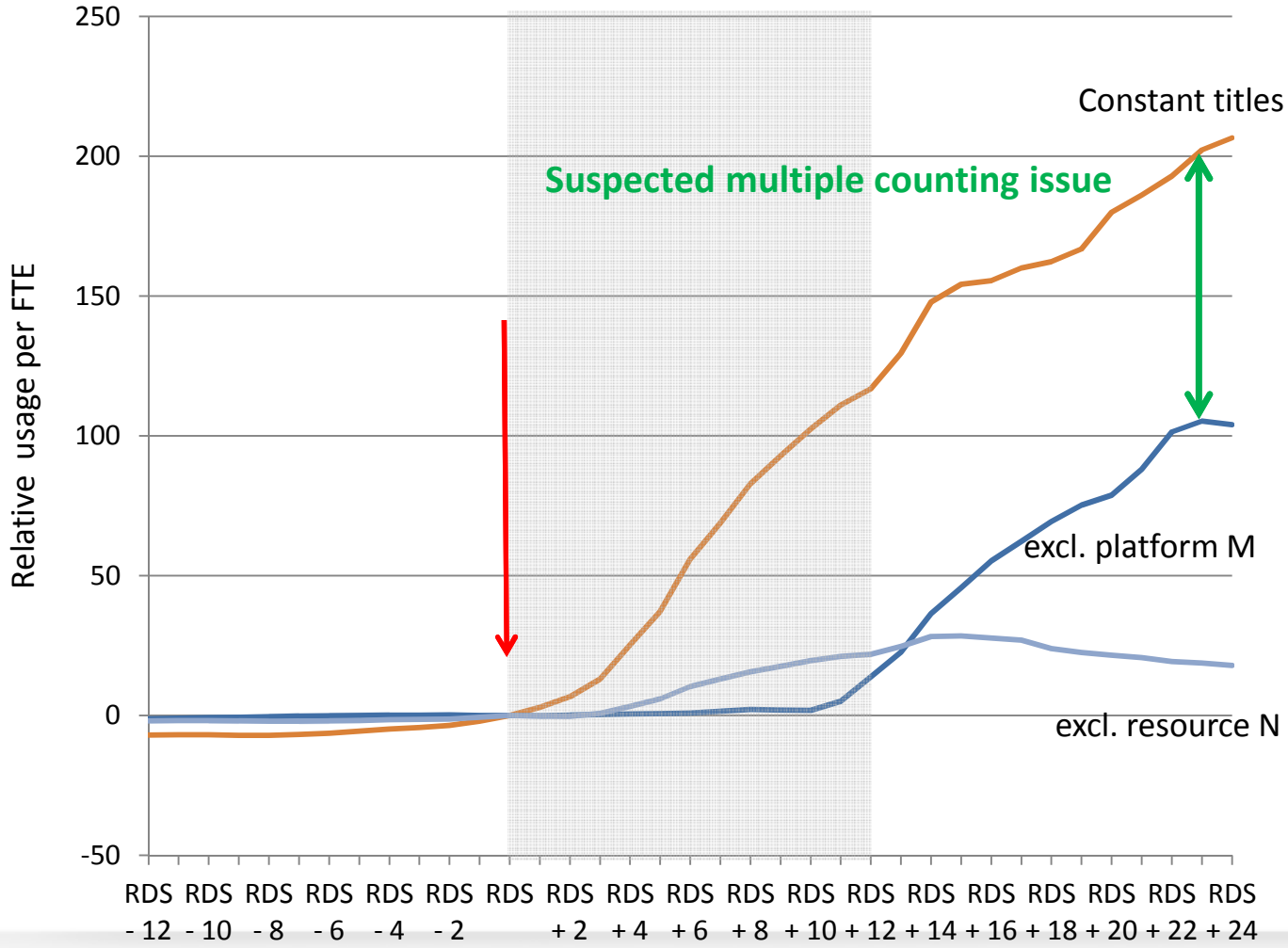
E-book usage per FTE for library E



- Overall usage going up
- Constant titles going up Increase inflated by one
- Subscription making up for 70% of the usage of the constant title set throughout
- E-book usage for publisher W increased by a factor of 8

Loughborough University

Database usage per FTE for library E



- database usage increased significantly immediately after RDS
- Issues with database counting?

Loughborough University

Usage analysis - summary

What can we say from the usage analysis?

- No straightforward answer – but it seems that overall library discovery technologies influence positively the use of academic resources
  - The effect may vary according to the type of resources – e-books seem to benefit greatly from RDS
- Isolating the sole impact of RDS is a challenge – multi-dimensional environment
  - Many other factors may affect usage – we have tried to control for content growth by providing an analysis including constant titles
- More data needed for a meaningful analysis
  - 2-year post-implementation data is not enough to pick up a trend and isolate other variables influencing usage

Additional findings from libraries

Perceived advantages for libraries:

- Generally, high levels of library satisfaction with RDS
- Increased usage – borne out by usage data
- Enhanced user experience (primary motivation – not increased usage)
  - One stop shop = single interface linked to full text
- Better use of subscriptions – no silos

Perceived challenges:

- Usage data analysis – not done routinely
- RDS searching aimed at undergrads? Starting point?
  - Can researchers benefit from RDS too?
- Lack of clarity in coverage from RDS suppliers
- Interoperability between systems
- Lack of co-operation between some publishers and some RDS suppliers

Additional findings from publishers and content providers

Perceptions when engaging with RDS:

- Improving discoverability and visibility of content
  - still very low traffic from RDS compared to search engines
  - particularly relevant for smaller publishers?
  - better service for their authors and readers
  - can publishers afford to wait and see where it is going?

Perceived challenges:

- Metadata RDS optimisation for improved discoverability
- Dilution of the publisher's brand within the RDS
- Lack of feedback/communication from RDS suppliers
- Lack of visibility and understanding of how data are used
  - Relevancy ranking

Other stakeholders in the information supply chain – some key findings

RDS – great tool – probably changing the library landscape in the short to medium term

But the use of RDS raises some questions:

- ✓ Are RDS a long term valid solution to Web-scale information searching?
- ✓ Costs & benefits to libraries?
- ✓ What is the effect on A&I databases for specialist information?

THANK YOU!

- Recommendations soon available in the full report that will be presented to UKSG

- For a copy of the report:
  - Check out the UKSG website - http://www.uksg.org/
  - Contact us for a copy of the report - lisu@lboro.ac.uk

Loughborough University