Tactics, Tips and Tricks for Telling the Library's Story

Kathleen Baril, Heather Crozier, Jenny Donley and Bethany Spieth
Ohio Northern University

Acknowledgement

———

We would like to acknowledge that the land we are meeting on today has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, specifically the **Shawnee**, **Miami**, **Wyandot** and **Delaware** Nations. We honor and respect the diverse Indigenous peoples connected to this territory on which we gather.

What We Will Cover

_ _ _

- Connecting what the library does to larger institutional goals and initiatives
- Data, data, data
- How to not talk like a librarian and explain the library's value to the institution

Background Information

- - -

- Ohio Northern University: approx. 2800 undergraduate students
- Serve College of Arts and Sciences, College of Business, College of Engineering and College of Pharmacy
- 5 librarians, 1 archivist and 5 library staff members

Budget Cutting Process - Ohio Northern University

— — —

- Every office and department was required to fill out templates regarding their programs.
- Library wrote three reports: Instruction, Information Resources, and Services and Outreach
- Questions predetermined but how we presented our story and what data to include was up to us.

Think, Pair, Share

— — —

1. How familiar are you with your university's strategic plan?
2. Do you regularly use it in library strategic planning?
3. Why or why not?

Connecting to wider institutional goals

— — —

Connect the library's strategic plan to the institution's strategic plan.

Example:

Library Strategic Plan Goal 3: Assess Information Literacy Program

Aligns with:

University plan: Goal 2 Strengthen the campus learning environment and its co-curricular programs and services.

Priority A: We will regularly assess student learning outcomes in our academic majors and periodically assess the general education program. The results of assessment will be used to improve academic majors and general education.

Connecting to wider institutional goals

— — —

University Strategic Plan:

Goal 5: Build and maintain long-term financial sustainability

Priority D: We will incorporate sustainable practices that will enable use to be better stewards of our environmental, energy and financial resources.

In our report:

Provide resources that meet the research needs of the university's undergraduate students and faculty while remaining within budget through careful analysis of usage statistics and tracking of financial resources. Participation in the OhioLINK and OhioNET consortia provides access to a wide array of online resources at the lowest price possible.

Statistics and Data: Perspective

— — —

Reframe the data you already collect:

- Demonstrate to shareholders the value and importance of what the library does
- For greater impact, express in a manner in which they can understand.

Statistics and Data: Think, Pair, Share

— — —

What statistics and data do you already collect at your library?

Results of index card activity

Statistics and Data: Specifics

— — —

What we collect:

- Resource totals: physical and electronic
- E-resource statistics: ebook, e-journal, streaming video/audio, databases
- Checkouts: local, consortial, and ILL
- Door count: automatic tracking process
  - Patron count/space utilization study: manual tracking process
- Reference questions: email, phone, in-person
- Instruction sessions: number of sessions and students enrolled in class
- Website hits and LibGuides visits
- Room reservations

Statistics and Data: Lessons

— — —

What we will collect or collect better going forward:

- Technical issues reported by patrons
- Tracking and assessing patron engagement in events held in and by the library

What we find powerful and endlessly useful:

- A survey of students and faculty that is conducted every three years
  - Provides both impressions, feedback, engagement, and go-to-resources
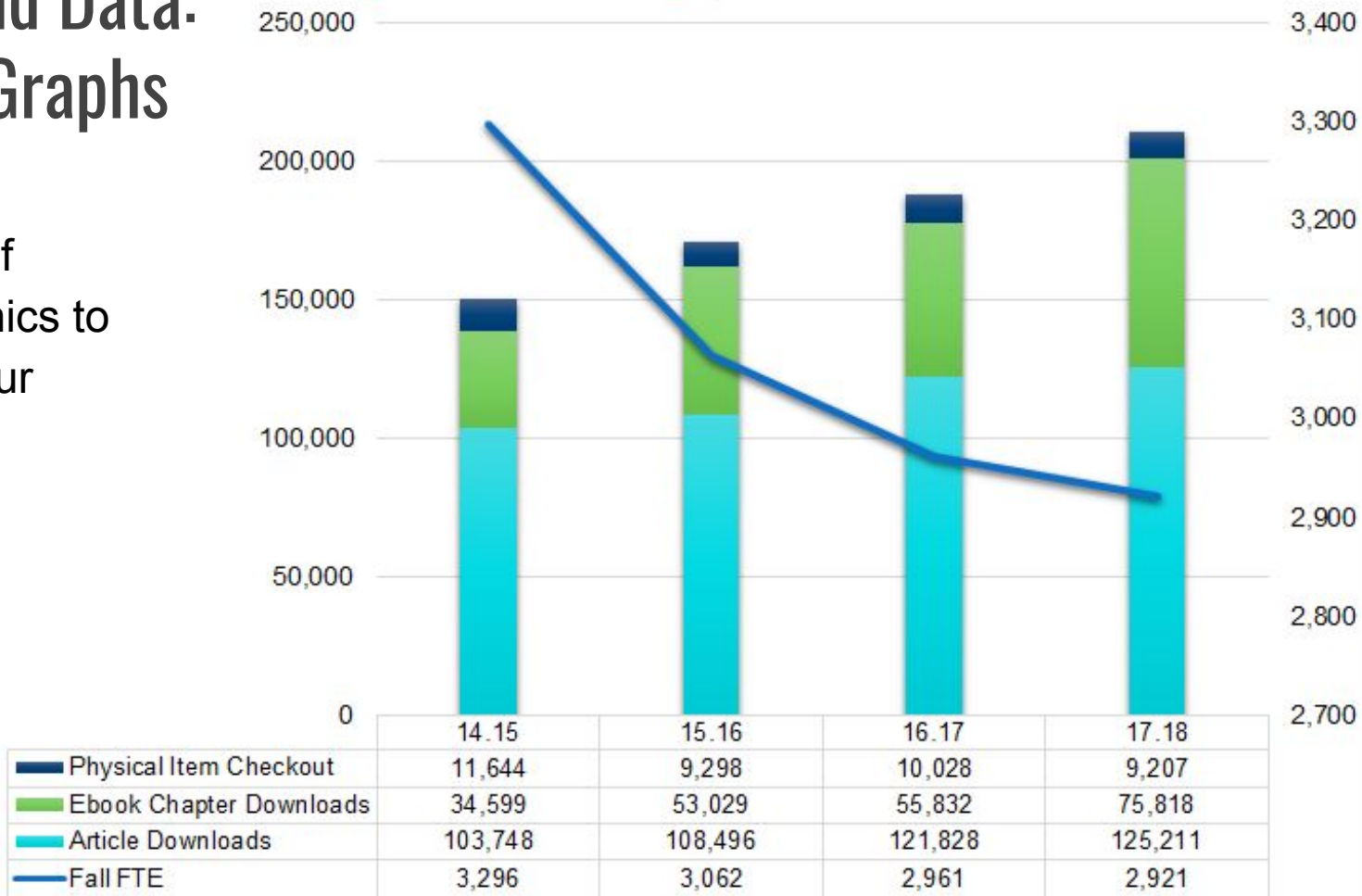
Statistics and Data: Meaning and Impact

———

- Equity of resource allocation and spending
  - All majors are important to us
- Evidence of resource utilization
  - Getting the most for our students
  - Cost per use
- Good stewards of our budget
  - Student-focused purchasing
- Responsiveness to student needs/requests
  - Connecting back to student surveys

Statistics and Data: Charts and Graphs

———

Make the most of charts and graphics to help illustrate your statistics.

Library Resource Usage, 2014/15 to 2017/18

	14.15	15.16	16.17	17.18
Physical Item Checkout	11,644	9,298	10,028	9,207
Ebook Chapter Downloads	34,599	53,029	55,832	75,818
Article Downloads	103,748	108,496	121,828	125,211
Fall FTE	3,296	3,062	2,961	2,921

Performance Benchmarking

———

"Performance benchmarking also known as comparative or metric benchmarking, compiles and compares measures of performance, such as the library's ratio of inputs (e.g., budget) to services provided (outputs), to determine how the library's operation compares with that of other libraries."

Dugan, R.E. & Hernon, P.(2018) *Financial Management in Academic Libraries: Data-Driven Planning and Budgeting*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Sources of Benchmarking Data

– – –

- IPEDS

For a fee:

- ACRL Annual Survey
- CUPA-HR - can be broken down by region
- ALA-APA Salary Survey (older data)

Choosing Peers for Benchmarking: The Goldilocks Dilemma

— — —

Potential Criteria:

- Region
- Carnegie classification
- Total FTE
- Mix of academic programs
- Other schools that your students are most likely to apply to
- "Stretch" peers
- Use peers that institutional research recommends
- Consortium
- Endowment

What to Benchmark

— — —

- Total collections expenditures
- Total collections expenditures per FTE student
- Collection expenditures on print, electronic resources, etc.
- Total personnel expenditures
- Personnel expenditures as a percentage of staff type
- Cost per hour open
- Total operations and maintenance expenses per FTE student and faculty
- And many more...

Dugan, R.E. & Hernon, P.(2018) *Financial Management in Academic Libraries: Data-Driven Planning and Budgeting*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Benchmarking

– – –

Pros:

- Useful tool to tell your story
- Administrators often like to see comparative data
- Hard quantitative data usually

Cons:

- May not always like what you find
- Can be difficult to identify peers
- Differences between how institutions report their data

Think, Pair, Share

— — —

- How do you explain library terms, procedures, and practices to people on your campus outside the library?

Credit: Peter Haygarth/Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards 2019

Answering Questions that Don't Apply

— — —

- Strategies
  - Find the closest library equivalent
  - Describe what the library does for the whole university
- Examples
  - Accreditation - ACRL Framework and ALA-accredited degrees
  - Retention Rate - library instruction and programming supports overall retention
  - Placement Rate - IL instruction contributes to overall university rate
  - Student Accomplishments - two student interns now working as librarians

Translating

— — —

- Circulation: lending of physical items
- Reference: assistance with finding and using library resources
- LibCal: software that enables room reservations

"To the Library"

Credit: Zur Bibliothek by bmgnrs via Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0

Describing Value

— — —

- Space
    - Only designated study space for undergraduates
    - Unaffiliated with any department or college
- Circulation and Course Reserves
    - Patrons need to borrow items for classwork and research
    - Need to ensure that high-demand items are available for all
    - Important for cost-saving
- Resource Sharing
    - Heterick alone cannot provide all the resources patrons will ever need
- General Library Help
    - Need someone always on hand to quickly provide point-of-need assistance

Summary

_ _ _

- Always be connecting what you do to the wider institution
- Data is very important; never know what might be useful
- Be creative when advocating the library's value
- Think about your audience
- Let everyone know how awesome the library is!

References

———

Carrigan, S.(2012). Selecting Peer Institutions with IPEDS and Other Nationally Available Data. In Valcik, N.A.(Ed.) *Benchmarking in Institutional Research* (61-68). San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Dugan, R.E. & Hernon, P.(2018) *Financial Management in Academic Libraries: Data-Driven Planning and Budgeting*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.

Levy, G.D. & Ronco, S.L.(2012). How Benchmarking and Higher Education Came Together. In Valcik, N.A.(Ed.) *Benchmarking in Institutional Research* (5-13). San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Questions?

— — —

Feel free to contact us:

- Kathleen Baril, k-baril@onu.edu
- Heather Crozier, h-crozier@onu.edu
- Jenny Donley, j-donley.1@onu.edu
- Bethany Spieth, b-spieth@onu.edu