

CARL Statistics 2003-2004

Trends and Observations

Context

In research libraries as in other organizations, planning and outcomes are linked through a chain of expected results--from inputs to activities to outputs to impacts. The annual *CARL Statistics* provide information about some inputs, activities and outputs. This national data, collected over many years, is an important source for monitoring Canadian research libraries, for observing trends and for suggesting issues which need further exploration. Other methods and resources are necessary to document the impact of research library collections and services and to show the importance of collaborative arrangements for our national information infrastructure.

A university administrator names librarians as

“the real heroes of the digital revolution in higher education . . . [because] they are the ones who have seen the farthest, done the most, accepted the hardest challenges, and demonstrated most clearly the benefits of digital information It is a testimony to their success that we take their achievement—and their information-management systems—for granted.”¹

Unfortunately, the dynamic and open nature of the digital collections and services in research libraries means these resources and activities are currently underrepresented in the annual national statistics. They may not, in fact, be amenable to the familiar descriptive statistics that are comparable among institutions.

Careful readers need to remember that, in spite of attention to corrections and clarity, there are limitations in the reported data. Definitions may vary, either over time or as interpreted by an individual institution. The reliability and accuracy of data collection and reporting methods may be inconsistent. Every year there are some data elements that are not reported by all libraries. Thus, conclusions or comparisons -whether between institutions or over time - should be made with caution, with knowledge of context and, preferably, in conjunction with other assessment methods. The footnotes for each table are an important part of the data.

Finally, there were changes in the CARL membership. A single institution, Library and Archives of Canada, was created from the former National Library of Canada which was a member and the National Archives of Canada which was not. There will be some discontinuities in reporting while the management information system for the new

¹ Edward L. Ayers. “The Academic Culture and the IT Culture: Their Effect on Teaching and Scholarship,” *Educause Review*, vol. 39, no. 8 (November/December 2004): p.50.

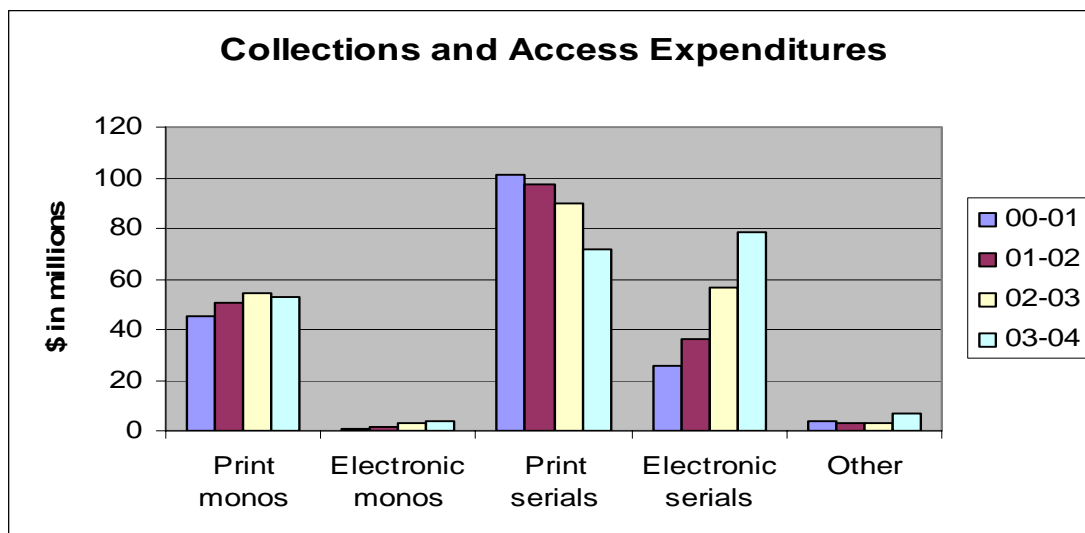
institution matures. The Library of Parliament became the thirtieth Association member and will report in future years.

Collections and Access

“Developments in digital technology, the introduction of the Web and the Internet, and new methods of creating, sharing, and using knowledge have changed dramatically the traditionally understood definitions of library collections and access services. Building collections and creating access to them are no longer achieved just within the walls of the library. Broadly defined, collections and access responsibilities are no longer distinct spheres within research libraries.”²

Traditional library statistics make it difficult to maintain a perspective of collection and access activities that are inextricably linked.

Total investment for collections and access rose to \$236.1 million from \$228.7 million, an increase of 3% paralleling the change in the Canadian Consumer Price Index. Expenditures for collections and access increased in 20 of the 29 reporting member libraries. Institutional funding received from external sources and expenditures on behalf of institutions by external agencies dropped from nearly 7% of the expenditures for collections and access in the previous year to 3% in the current year, undoubtedly reflecting the end of federal and provincial matching funds for the Canadian National Site Licensing Project (now the Canadian Research Knowledge Network). More than half of the total external funding from endowments and grants (\$5.5 million) was at a single institution, the University of Toronto.



² ARL Collections & Access Issues Task Force. “Collections & Access for the 21st-Century Scholar: Changing Roles of Research Libraries,” *ARL: A Bimonthly Report on Research Library Issues and Actions from ARL, CNI, and SPARC*, no.225 (December 2002), <http://www.arl.org/newsletr/225/>.

For the first time, a larger proportion of collections and access expenditures were for electronic serials (34%) than for print serials (31%). These similar proportions represent a \$17.8 million decrease in expenditures for print serials and a \$21.8 million increase in expenditures for electronic journals. Almost two-thirds of university libraries facilitate access to the content of electronic journals by providing linking software.

The early stage of the digital information environment is evident in the information reported about electronic monographs. The proportion of overall collection expenditures for electronic monographs rose from 1% to 2%, dollars spent rose 24%, and the number of titles acquired increased over 1000%. This dramatic increase was influenced by large additions of over 200,000 titles at two institutions and over 100,000 titles at another. There are undoubtedly still vagaries in reporting electronic monograph collections and access.

The proportion of expenditures for print (23%) monographs remained fairly stable. Although expenditures for print monographs increased in over half the reporting institutions, total expenditures for print monographs declined after several years of increasing expenditures. The share of total expenditures for "other" materials such as back files, audio visual materials, and manuscripts increased to 3%, perhaps driven by atypical million dollar expenditures at two institutions.

The variety among CARL members is evident in the number of volumes added at individual institutions: from 15,434 to 230,073 volumes with a median of 38,737 volumes added. The total number of volumes added in reporting libraries decreased by 10% over the previous year over the previous year, partly because of the shift from print to electronic journals. Library collections are not static and at the same time as over 1.5 million volumes were added to research libraries, about .25 million volumes were withdrawn. The number of volumes withdrawn in individual libraries ranged from 0 to 66,793 with a median of 4,500.

The 61,646 linear metres of manuscript and archival holdings in the reporting libraries shows the continual increase of roughly 4% each year. As these collections continue to expand, institutions are faced with the ever-growing demand on storage space within their facilities. Limited space means that libraries are now looking at alternatives, such as shared storage space with either other university departments or other universities, to meet this challenge.

Many of the access components of "collections and access" such as proxy servers, federated search software, and digitization projects are invisible to users (and national library statistics). However, document delivery and interlibrary loan are long-standing, visible components of the inextricably linked collections and access responsibility. The number of items sent to other institutions by university libraries was stable. At the same time, the number of items sent by CISTI (692,587) is greater than the number sent by all other institutions combined and a continuing significant decline in the number sent by CISTI resulted in a 5% decrease nationally. The number of items received by reporting

institutions decreased by 10%, undoubtedly reflecting the increased availability of electronic journal articles.

Digitization projects to create new resources or convert existing resources are another manifestation of the way collections and access are inextricably linked. Twenty of 27 universities have undertaken digitization projects. In the majority of institutions, funding for digitization projects comes from government, private or university funds as well as from the library. Only one fifth of member institutions report receiving private funding for this initiative.

“Wrapped in Services”

A research library director wrote recently that

“to equate the value proposition for libraries with their purchased collections is akin to assessing an educational experience solely on the basis of the textbook used....The activities of seeking and using information are profoundly interactive human behaviors. Every library collection is wrapped in services, and both the services and the collections reflect the unique needs and interests of the library’s community of readers and learners.”³

It is understandable that the service and human component of the research library value proposition is not captured well in national library statistics because interactive human behaviors are seldom readily susceptible to quantification. Furthermore, the services and interactions in the research library value proposition rightly reflect a unique local environment. Individual Canadian research libraries are participating in projects such as LibQUAL, MINES (Measuring the Impact of Networked Information Resources), and SAILS (Standardized Assessment of Information Literacy Skills) to develop and utilize tools that provide meaningful information about library users and use.

National statistics can, nevertheless, provide indications about library services. Total circulation (initial loans) increased by 5% over the previous year at the same time as FTE student enrollment increased by 8%. Students and researchers continue to rely on print volumes in addition to a rich environment of online and web resources. The number of articles downloaded from the Scholars Portal online journal project in Ontario provides perspective. Article downloads from academic journals increased by 27% during the period that library circulation increased by 5%. There are puzzling differences in the circulation changes at individual institutions, from an increase of 45% to a decrease of 20% (compared with plus 15% to minus 15% last year). This may reflect changes in policy or reporting as well as in use.

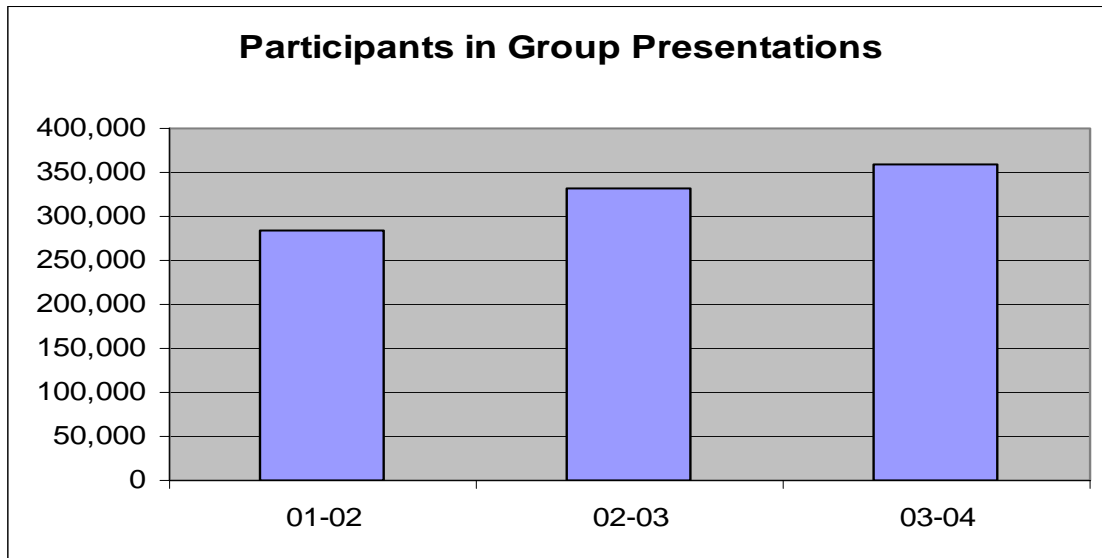
The median number of initial loans per student is 18 with a range from 13 to 32. Interestingly, there is little relation between the number of initial loans per student and

³ Ann J. Wolpert in an e-mail symposium. “Google at the Gate” *American Libraries*, vol. 36. no. 3 (March 2005), p. 43

whether a library circulates journals. Of the 14 university libraries that do not circulate journals, seven experience per student circulation that is above the median. Results like these help support the observation that research library services and collections reflect the needs and interests of a local community.

In-house collection use continued a steady decline, decreasing by 19% over the previous year undoubtedly reflecting the rapid expansion of access to online journals. At the same time, user surveys consistently document the importance of “library as place” particularly for undergraduates. Twenty of 27 university libraries provide an information or learning commons facility.

The total number of presentations to student groups and numbers of attendees increased again. The 8% increase in participants matched the increase in student enrollment. Participation in group presentations at university libraries ranged from the equivalent of 14% of FTE students to 99% of FTE students with a median of 50% equivalent participation.



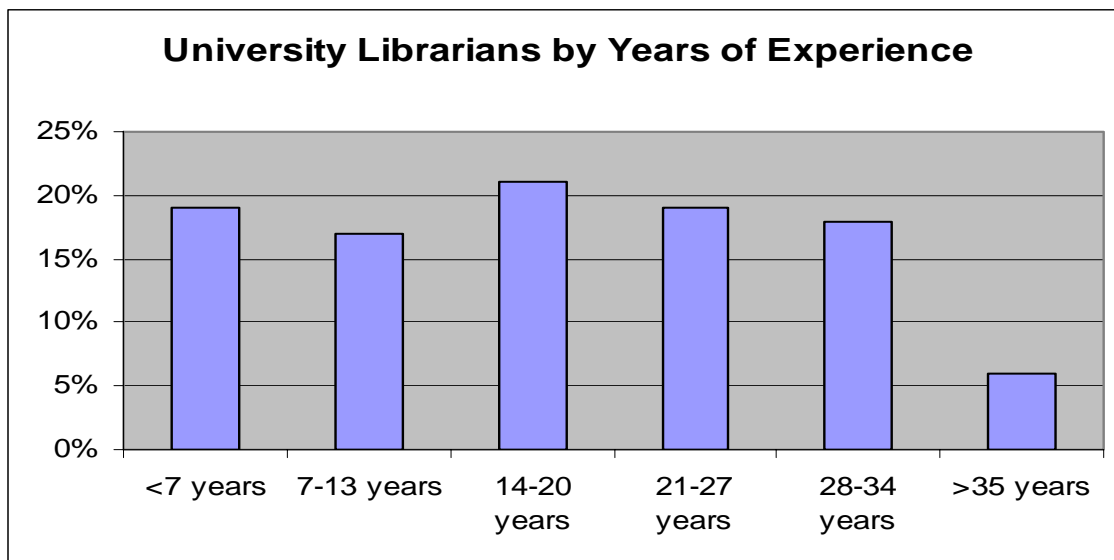
The total number of reference transactions decreased by 5% with decreases in 18 of 29 libraries. Again, there is great variation with a reported increase of 168% at one university and a reported decrease of 67% at another university in the same city. While reference transactions have decreased overall, two institutions—Sherbrooke and Toronto—have experienced double digit percentage increases for two consecutive years. The average number of hours per week of reference service offered by CARL university libraries was 99, maintaining the gradual increase from 91.7 in 1999-00. Of the two institutions with a substantial increase in reference transactions for two consecutive years, Toronto has among the longest hours of public service and Sherbrooke the shortest. There has been little change in the number of service points. The number of libraries offering synchronous or virtual reference services has increased from 15 to 17 of the 29.

Librarians and Library Staff

The percentage of the library budget spent on salaries and wages remained stable and the absolute expenditure for salaries and wages increased in line with the CPI. After two years of modest growth, the number of people working in research libraries did not change. Professional staff grew more in both absolute and percentage terms than the other staff categories. This pattern was accentuated by the growth in “other professionals” at the Library and Archives of Canada, probably reflecting archivists in the new institution.

The number of students⁴ in research universities is rising more rapidly than the number of library staff. As a result the median number of students per library staff has risen from 101 two years ago to 121 in the current reporting year with a range in from 176 to 82. With few additional staff, the increase in library users and changing requirements for collections, access, and services, there is a continuing imperative to realign library human resources.

For the fifth consecutive year, the average years of experience of professional staff in university libraries dropped, a 3% decrease in this period. Although the average years of experience dropped, the median professional salary in university libraries of \$71,210 was 4% higher than the previous year. The Atlantic provinces had the highest median professional salaries and the Prairie provinces had the highest average years of experience. The highest (Carleton) and lowest (Western Ontario) median salaries remain in Ontario. The national distribution of university librarians by years of experience is fairly even.



Salary distribution tables for professional librarians in university libraries continue to demonstrate the link between years of experience and salary. Average salaries climb

⁴ Source : Canadian Research Knowledge Network, enrollment data 2003-2004.

from \$50,657 for those with less than 7 years of professional experience to \$90,710 for those with over 35 years of professional experience.

Expenditures

Total expenditures in Canadian research libraries increased by almost 2% over the previous year, very close to the change in CPI for the period and considerably less than the increase in student enrollment. Considering the digital information revolution in research libraries, there has been a remarkable consistency in the proportion of expenditures on materials, staffing and operating budget lines in recent years. There was a small increase in the proportion spent on collections and access and a small decrease in the proportion spent on operating. The median library expenditure per student at Canadian universities was \$830 with a range from \$486 to \$1162.

Ellen Hoffmann
York University Libraries
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