



# Library Analytics Survey Among Academic Libraries

Results Summary  
Fall 2021



Sponsored by:

**EBSCO**

# Library Analytics Survey 2021

---

Table of Contents	Page
<b>Objectives &amp; Methodology</b>	3
<b>Results Summary</b>	4-8
<b>Satisfaction with Existing Data Management Solutions</b>	4
<b>Barriers to Data Collection and Analysis</b>	4
<b>Impact of Additional Resources on Data Collection and Analysis</b>	4
<b>Specific Data Management Difficulties</b>	5
<b>Other Causes of Difficulties Conducting Library Analytics</b>	5
<b>Observations about Tools Required to do Effective Data Management</b>	5
<b>Risk of Not Utilizing Proper Analytics</b>	6
<b>Most Important Library Analytics</b>	6
<b>Data Management Security and Standards</b>	7
<b>Effects of Library Analytics</b>	7
<b>The Future of Library Analytics</b>	8
<b>Respondent Demographics</b>	9
<b>Appendix I</b> Open-ended comments to “What types of analytics studies would you conduct to enable you to provide the best possible services to users?”	10-13
<b>Appendix II</b> Open-ended comments to “Briefly describe your ideal analytics tool.”	14-17

# Library Analytics Survey

---

Fall 2021

## Study Objectives:

*Library Journal*, working with EBSCO, developed a survey about data management practices in academic libraries.

Objectives of the study included learning:

- Satisfaction with existing practices and solutions.
- Challenges associated with doing data collection and analysis.
- Impact of data analytics on library service and demonstrating the library's value to administrators.
- Future of library analytics and desired metrics.

## Methodology:

An *LJ* branded survey invitation was emailed to academic libraries on October 7, 2021, with a reminder sent on October 15. The survey was also advertised in *LJ*'s Academic Newswire newsletter. A drawing to win one of three \$100 Visa® electronic gift cards was offered as an incentive to participate.

The fielding period ended on October 23. The survey was hosted, tabulated, and analyzed by *Library Journal* research. Results in this report are based on a total sample of 196 academic libraries. The data is unweighted.

# Results Summary

---

## Satisfaction with Existing Data Management Solutions

- Of the total sample, nearly the same percentage of respondents are satisfied with their data management solutions as are dissatisfied (net satisfied 29.1% versus net dissatisfied 28.1%). A large percentage, 43%, are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- Respondents from larger schools are less likely to be satisfied, but this may be a result of reaching staff with less familiarity with data analytics and who chose to remain neutral.
- Administrators have the highest degree of net dissatisfaction with their current analytics solutions (36%). Support services personnel overall have the highest net satisfaction, but they also have the highest percentage of "very dissatisfied" (6%).

## Barriers to Data Collection and Analysis

- The three most common barriers to data collection are lack of time (selected by 53%), lack of personnel (51%) and lack of robust tools (46%). Just under ten percent report having no barriers to data collection.
- Barriers to data *analysis* are slightly more prevalent. Over half of libraries in the sample named these three as barriers to data analysis at their institution: lack of time (61%), lack of expertise (54%), and lack of personnel (52%).

## Impact of Additional Resources on Data Collection and Analysis

- Asked what additional resources would most likely help them overcome data management barriers, time and personnel resources emerged as the two that would have the most significant impact.

	Significant Impact	Moderate Impact	No Impact
Time	62%	35%	3%
Personnel Resources	62%	34%	4%
Robust Tools	55%	42%	3%
Library Organizational Motivation	42%	45%	14%
Campus Support	32%	44%	24%

Q. How much do you think the quality of your library's data collection and analysis would be impacted if you had MORE of the following?

## Results Summary continued

---

### Specific Data Management Difficulties

- The top impediments to effective data management are data collection, data cleaning, and the siloing of data.
- Administrators are most likely to select "Data is difficult to harvest," while personnel in support services (who likely work directly with the data) select "data is difficult to clean up" most often.
- For larger schools (enrollment 10K or more), difficulties cleaning the data and siloed data are bigger obstacles than harvesting data.

### Other Causes of Difficulties Conducting Library Analytics

- Losing institutional knowledge due to staff turnover has been a significant setback for half of respondents (52%). Changing standards (49%) and lack of longitudinal studies (42%) have also caused significant problems for academic libraries.

### Observations about Tools Required to do Effective Data Management

- Two-thirds of respondents feel that the requisite tools for effective data management are expensive.
- While data management tools are widely believed to be available in the marketplace, 58 percent of respondents feel there are too few tools available for use at their library (and a considerably higher percentage of administrators—73%).
- Support services staff are less inclined to feel they do not have the expertise to use the requisite tools, compared to 56% of the total sample.

	Net Agree	Neutral	Net Disagree
The requisite tools are expensive	68%	24%	8%
There are few tools available at my library	58%	19%	23%
I do not have the expertise to use the requisite tools	56%	22%	21%
The requisite tools are complicated	54%	37%	9%
There are few tools available in the marketplace	28%	43%	29%

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the tools required to do effective data management?

## Results Summary continued

---

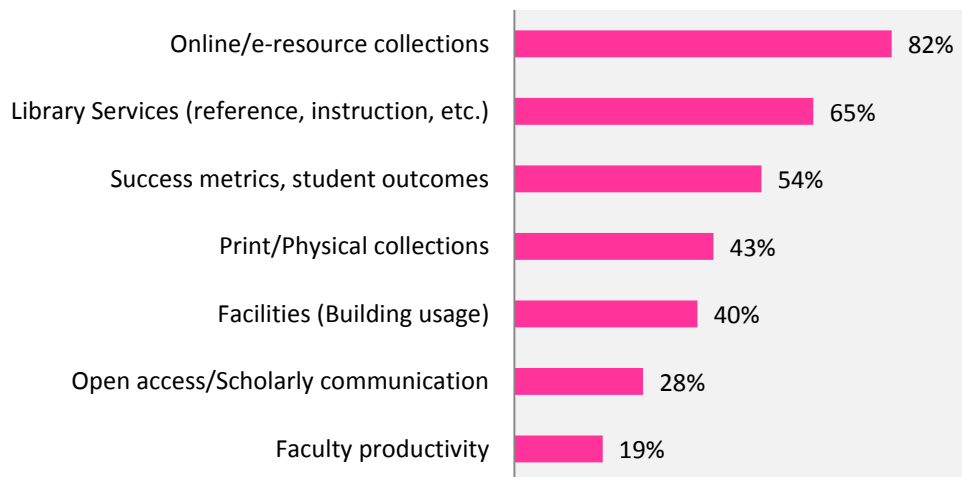
### Risk of Not Utilizing Proper Analytics

- The majority of respondents feel the risks of not using proper analytics are considerable:
  - Eight out of ten feel the library will not be valued/considered by administrators.
  - Nearly as many (78%) fear the correlations between engagement and user outcomes will be unclear.
  - If assessment proves ineffective, 62% feel that reductions in traditional library services could be the result.

### Most Important Library Analytics

- Online/e-resource collection usage stands out as the most important metric for libraries to collect, followed by library services such as reference and instruction. Just over half (54%) rated success measurements/student outcomes as extremely important, but these measurements can be difficult to obtain.

**Q. How important is it for your library to understand analytics regarding each of the following? Rated Extremely Important**



## Results Summary continued

---

### Data Management Security and Standards

- Three-quarters of respondents have serious worries about data collection and analytics. The worries cited most often are data privacy (49%) and ethical use of data (42%). “Data access controls” and “security & data overreliance” are each worries for about a third of respondents.
- Administrators are the least likely to have reservations about data management. Support services staff were most likely to cite multiple concerns, particular data privacy and ethical use of data.
- The most important aspect of data analytics that respondents feel needs monitoring or standards is “aggregation of data to ensure confidentiality” (38% ranked it most important). “Anonymizing data” was a close second for the entire sample (35%), however, this was ranked number one by support services personnel by a large margin. “Data retention schedules” was selected as most important by just over a quarter of respondents (27%).

### Effects of Library Analytics

- Over 90 percent of respondents agree (60 percent “strongly” agree) that library analytics will broaden our understanding of how users engage with the library. Respondents also highly expect library analytics will show the library’s value and justify budget decisions in the future (both 85%).

	Net Agree	Neutral	Net Disagree
Broaden our understanding of how users engage with the library	91%	9%	0%
Show the library's value	85%	12%	3%
Justify budget decisions	85%	11%	4%
Deepen the already known ways to do assessment	71%	27%	2%

Q. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements that complete this sentence: ‘The future of library analytics will...’?

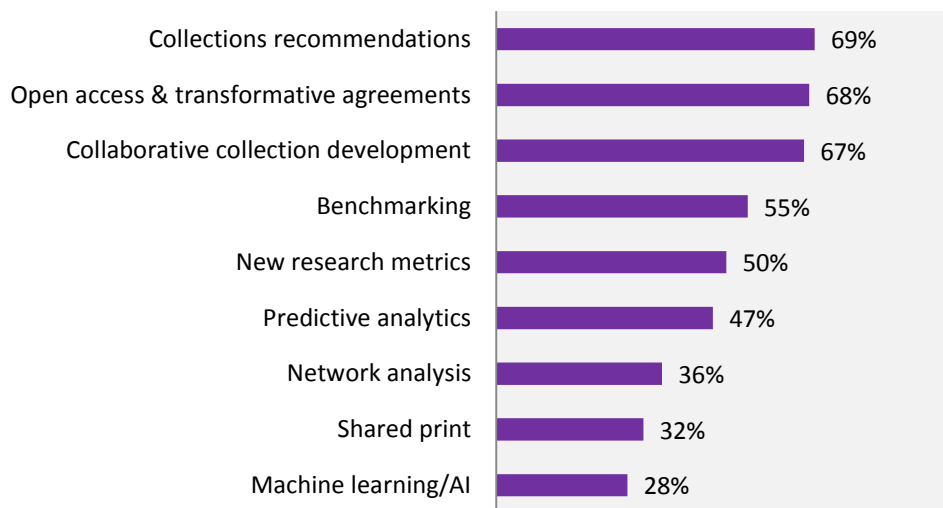
## Results Summary continued

---

### The Future of Library Analytics

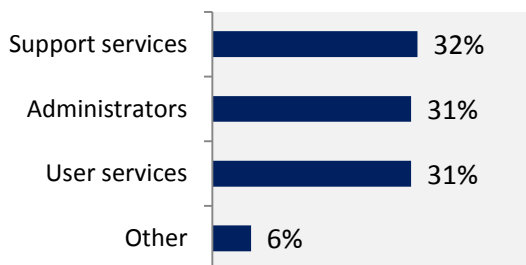
- The features that respondents would most like to see their data management processes include are “collections recommendations,” “open access and transformative agreements,” and “collaborative collection development,” each selected by two-thirds of the sample.
- It should be noted that “benchmarking” scored very highly with library administrators.

**Q. Do you believe the future of library analytics should include any of the following? Check all that apply.**



# Respondent demographics

Q. What is your primary job function?



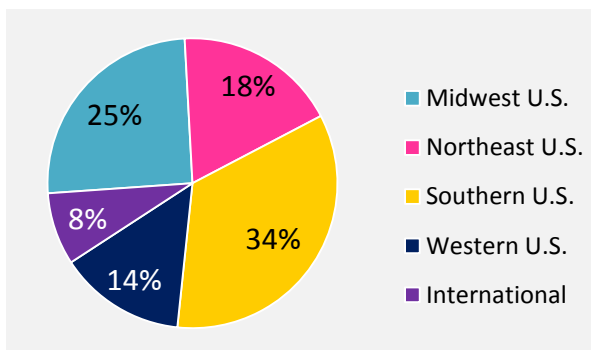
Q. Approximately how many total students are currently enrolled in your institution?

(Average enrollment = 10,958)

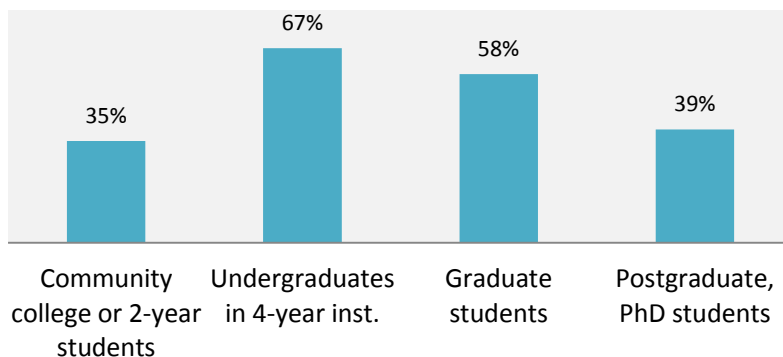
**63%** small institutions (<10K students)

**37%** large institutions (10K+ students)

Q. Where is your institution located?



Q. What level of students regularly use your library? Check all that apply.



## Appendix I (Open-ended Responses)

---

### What types of analytics studies would you conduct to enable you to provide the best possible services to users?

- A deeper look at who is using our resources and what class/need 'drove' them there.
- A five-point Likert scale survey tools given to key stakeholders such as undergrad students, grad students, and faculty
- A way to emphasize the positivity of the result of interactions. Analytics only tells a number, but that number has a story.
- Ability to merge multiple vendor reports (e. g., COUNTER reports) into one file
- Aggregate student groups -- e.g. Senior biology majors -- and triangulated learning outcomes.
- Anything that might better tie library usage to student outcomes and to faculty research outcomes
- Better ways to integrate (say) Google Analytics from our web page, and our print usage data.
- cohort, cross-sectional...
- Collection assessment; physical space use assessment;
- collection dev and student success
- Contact with students; contact with faculty; database usage
- Correlation of library use to student success. Satisfaction of found and used sources as related to actual information need (I know that's not very numbers-based).
- Counter report analysis from databases, user services statistics, print collection usage.
- Database/electronic resource usage
- Deeper analysis of use of electronic materials would be helpful.
- Demonstrate how library info lit instruction produces better student outcomes.
- department or major affiliation; type of student (undergrad, professional, graduate, post-docs)
- Descriptive, Diagnostic, Predictive and Prescriptive analytics.
- Detailed analysis of how the library and its services are used, their impact over time. Looking for changes over time and the impact of interventions
- Detailed user experience studies with our interfaces, correlations between library usage and student success
- Do they use our services if not why. Stop doing things with low value. WHO uses the library and what do they do. Is there a correlation with class instruction and that individual using the library services. Why do students use Chat where they were not using the reference desk? Connecting social media with services promoted.
- Electronic resource package assessments (because I work in acquisitions)

## What types of analytics studies would you conduct to enable you to provide the best possible services to users? - Continued

- Ethnographic interviews with users to better understand the nuanced relationship with library (resources and services) that better reflects experiences that are lost when users reduced to quantitative metrics.
- Figure out in a less convoluted way what people are using online; what should stay and what should go.
- Getting more user feedback on info lit instruction and library services
- How our e-resources and print resources are used
- I am interested in how many students are using our buildings and all we have going is our gate counts right now. I would like to combine that with the numbers of students booking study spaces, using our technology, and maybe some general info about the kinds of students coming to the library and their majors.
- I have done surveys to enable the best possible services to users.
- I look mostly at cost versus use in terms of works seen. So cost per use (I ignore number of results found or searches made)
- I need to know what students think of the library. Mainly, what their frustrations are. If I know what the issues are, I can work to rebuild trust between students and the library. If I can improve engagement, I can improve CD and LI, because I know what the students need in terms of materials and research assistance.
- I would do a Predictive study. I will look more into what is likely to happen? This means I want to know things for the FUTURE.
- I would like to see how effectively our resources are being utilized by user. How effective is our discovery system for searching etc.
- I'd like to see whether there is a correlation between amount of library use, on a number of variables, as compared to student outcomes.
- Impact of library services and collections on student success.
- library space usage patterns; research literacy needs for first year/2nd year/etc. students; faculty training needs relative to research literacy; database optimization for budgetary considerations vis a vis coverage/quality.
- Library's relationship to student success - is it a direct correlation?
- Longitudinal studies involving first year through fourth year students to determine the impact of library use on student success.
- Looking at student retention based on library use
- More often user surveys and studies. Be able to keep track of students' progress.
- Overlap analysis of my library's collection with those libraries in my consortia. Overlap analysis of electronic resource collections so we can use our limited funds in the most effective way possible. Ideally, I'd be able to get an idea of usage via proxy server logs as well as COUNTER reports. I'd also like ILL data from ILLiad interact with our LSP data instead of being disparate systems. I'd like to have the library usage data of physical and electronic resources mapped to student success and retention.

## What types of analytics studies would you conduct to enable you to provide the best possible services to users? - Continued

- Reference transactions, resource usage statistics, interlibrary loan, acquisitions
- Shared Print studies
- simple way to study building usage and make decisions based on complex data
- Something that brings in the data we are currently not measuring such as heat mapping of building usage.
- space usage; online access, resource usage stats, student behavior to determine staffing needs/hours
- Student learning outcomes; collections assessment
- Student success by using the library resources versus students who do not use any library resources
- Student use of library website vs use of general internet searches to access library resources
- Studies that explore who we are reaching and who we aren't with various collections and services. This will help us serve all people better.
- Studies that look at the correlation between usage of library services and student success that allow for determining what services have the most meaningful impacts.
- Studies that show where subscription content overlaps to allow more efficient use of library funds would be beneficial (reduce redundancy).
- Surveys
- To be able to connect usage with user characteristics
- Types of searches people are doing to know if they are doing them wisely. Also, low usage might mean we need to train/emphasize that product more.
- Usage data analytics for electronic and physical collections, facilities, and open access resources.
- Usage data for use of e-resources. And of print resources. We've found no practical tool for either, but the former is long overdue. I've consulted with colleague, and all pretend that have it mastered, and none does.
- Usage of online resources
- Usage of our online and physical resources
- Usage stats for all online resources
- Usage, satisfaction, recommendations
- Use of eBooks vs Textbooks for each college
- Use of resources
- Use of shared resources
- User satisfaction Instruction and Student success and retention
- We currently do a long standing diversity audit, on top of our content audits. It's a good way to ensure the quality books being selected by our patrons are also diverse and representative of our community

### What types of analytics studies would you conduct to enable you to provide the best possible services to users? - Continued

- Website usage, website UX testing, electronic resources usage, computer terminal usage, how materials are most accessed...so many!
- We've done some preliminary research on our website usability, but I'd like to dig deeper into this.
- What data can tell us more about how to increase awareness of library resources - when are students and faculty failing to connect with resources.

## Appendix II (Open-ended Responses)

---

### Briefly describe your ideal analytics tool.

- A bit pie in the sky, but a tool that would aggregate everything in one place - for ease of access, ease of comparison, etc.
- A combination of general surveys combined with watching a select group of students try to complete tasks through the website while they talk through the process.
- A combination of Likert scale with guided open-ended questions related to research topics and student major areas of study
- A graphical user interface that can walk the user through options to build an effective report. Currently I use OBI in a few different areas and the learning curve can be quite steep.
- A multiplatform tool that lets me access/import data from multiple sources with simple user-friendly report building tools that can provide data tables as well as easy to understand infographics.
- A one stop shop for all data collection is ideal. Inputting and pulling numbers from several locations brings challenges in keeping things standard each time the numbers are pulled.
- Able to harvest data from a variety of tools, SQL databases, emailed spreadsheets, API connectors, Open source!!! Templates, able to connect to GOOGLE Analytics, and Facebook, twitter, Blogs to capture data and "Make AI assumptions" AI noticed that after a post on social media that Holds on books went up 20% in the next week." or These students have used the library checking out books or using articles more after instruction 2 years ago than these students who have not had instruction" I could go on.
- Affordable and easy to learn and teach others how to use.
- Affordable and easy to learn, some of the tools currently out there require a steep learning curve. I work at a small library where it is hard for us to specialize and have the time to add additional duties to our already tight schedules.
- Analog
- Brings disparate data together reliably and transparently, allows for the provision of data context and preserves data for long term access
- Can automatically keep track of students' record, library instructions and impacts to students.
- Centralized tool that can ingest and normalize varying types of data (library and non-library data) and provide varying levels of report generation (standardized reports as well as the ability to create your own reports)
- cloud based, easy to use, collects lots of data points in the same tool, easy to run reports, easy to generate graphics or dashboards...
- doodle.com, survey monkey, cognito forms
- easy to input data, harvest data, manipulate data visually. easy way to identify what data was used and how it was used to support various projects in the past in order to inform good data methods for future questions that we want to study.

### Briefly describe your ideal analytics tool. - Continued

- Easy to use and can get information from all databases at once.
- Easy to use and customize for specific needs. Intuitive for the user to navigate and produces data sets that are sortable, searchable, and reproduceable.
- Easy to use and implement and one that does not require a lot of staff time.
- Easy to use for output of clear charts, infographics
- easy to use, intuitive to set up
- Easy to use, understand, and present findings.
- Enables us to know which academic programs are using which items.
- Flexibility with what metrics to include - pick from a menu and then combine
- Flexible and easy to use and configure.
- Granular, configurable, permanent, easy to use, cheap
- Great UX
- Have the ability to assign notes to numbers.
- human brain
- I gather my usage stats manually. The tools provided are overpriced and have too many constraints.
- I haven't used enough tools to answer this question. However, any tool that I can use to get students to tell me what they want/expect/need from the library would be useful. The survey that the previous librarian did briefly covered the library, but was mainly focused on the school in general.
- I lack expertise here. Ideally, an analytics tool will be first, free or affordable to a cash strapped small college, and also well documented.
- I think a tool where we could look up diversity data for individual books collected by other libraries would be useful. That way we could streamline the assessment process
- I track instruction and use an Access database to record sessions. I use Excel to analyze the data. I do the same thing for librarian-led presentations. These can be campus presentations, conference presentations, etc.
- I will go to every class on the campus and do a survey. This way I will know I am reaching students and their needs.
- I wish all online library databases used the same definitions of use.
- I wish I could. I don't know enough to give details. But I would like things that can provide comparative data ACROSS multiple platforms, e.g. Wiley, Elsevier, Springer packages.
- I'd like to make it easier to draw in data from different sources, e.g. merging COUNTER reports from different ebook platforms (which we do using SUSHI) and also assigning call numbers to ebooks, or combining our own circulation information with WorldCat holdings
- I'm a little unsure of the question, but a robust one that could analyze a lot of different features, collections, shared collections, print and electronic.

### Briefly describe your ideal analytics tool. - Continued

- Ingests data from multiple sources, both on automated and manual bases. Allows for scoping and filtering to include various levels of specificity as to measures and date ranges, and intervals of time. Easily calculates and visualizes relationships between desired variables. Allows for creation and generation (both on-demand and scheduled) of reports. Retains data and allows management of permissions to access different data sets.
- It is able to collect data at the individual level and is defaulted to opt out but allows the student or faculty to provide us with access to their usage data - also it allows us to begin greater personalization of services based on past usage and predicted future usage
- Less is more.
- Love Springshare - all in one place, able to pull up variety of stats with variety of reports to address stat needs
- monthly reports, sent directly to my email.
- My ideal analytics tool is something that doesn't require another advance degree. In other words, it'll be intuitive and user friendly.
- My ideal analytics tool is user friendly, provides the possibility to schedule ahead reports, comparisons and also have benchmarking data.
- NOT EXPENSIVE. Graphic interface. Can import COUNTER data efficiently. Can spit out ACRL and other common data sets. Allows uses to create their own datasets (and perhaps share them with others.) Easily output pretty charts and graphs. Make it more useful than Excel.
- One missing tool is simply a gate counter to number those entering the building
- One that aggregates the data automatically and presents it in an easy-to-read format. I'm not asking for much.
- One that allows me to view various data (e.g., collections, space/network traffic, eresource usage, website data, etc.) in a single interface. Even though I don't want to compare these statistics, I would like to keep them in a single portal.
- One that doesn't take more than about 20% of one FTE staff position to use for all library data gathering, analysis and reporting; costs less than \$500/yr.; and can process store and report all types of library data in one easy-to-use dashboard, showing any permutation of interrelationships between data types.
- One that would provide ready made datasets that are easy to use and available for librarians to consider. --thanks
- One that's robust enough to gather details but simple to use.
- One where I can ask questions \_I\_ want to ask, not pick from a predetermined canned menu of options.
- Open platform and used by multiple institutions for benchmarking purposes.
- perhaps a one-stop tool that would hold data from different areas (reference interactions, instruction, building and study room use, feedback from students and faculty) that we can analyze the data in different ways. It would provide visualization aspects to it as well.
- Simple to use, harvests COUNTER data automatically. Able to adapt to 80% of vendor platforms.

### Briefly describe your ideal analytics tool. - Continued

- Something that allows multiple inputs of data from different sources such as the LMS, eresource usage, access control, etc.
- Something that can gather from any designated place easily.
- Something that connects library analytics to assessment/student success tools already deployed by the college (Portfolium, Starfish, etc..)
- Something that could monitor usage of databases, the Discovery catalog, linking would help. We do have a license manager which should give some good analytics for databases.
- something that is easy to set up and get data, not something that requires hours of set up
- Something that's been custom configured for the library (academic or public) settings
- Something to assess library services such as information literacy instruction and reference assistance in terms of student learning outcomes
- Staff with time!
- STATA
- talks to data services to pull in data and offers attractive charts and graphics.
- That would be Excel
- This tool would allow us to set up COUNTER5/SUSHI data harvesting from each vendor used.
- Time to learn python better
- user-friendly, versatile
- Uses the same named data points for databases (too many databases name their metrics different things or do things like cost/search but not also cost/use, etc) and has robust comparison graphic options so we aren't just looking at an enormous spreadsheet.
- We don't really have one!