Shared Advocacy through Data: Looking Beyond the High Cost of Journals

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Shared Advocacy through Data: Looking Beyond the High Cost of Journals

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Abstract:
Academic libraries have a long history of advocating for additional funding for their collections. One strategy is to partner with a Faculty Senate Library Committee (FSLC) to take on the cause. In spring 2011 OSU Libraries began this process by presenting our FSLC with a range of data they could use to tell our story to the Faculty Senate, campus administration, and other stakeholders. We will continue to work with them to advocate for our collections budget. As we explore these issues for our campus, larger questions come up. Which data best promotes libraries? What are additional strategies to pique campus stakeholders' interest in a library's success? How can assessment data be used to strengthen our case for a better budget? Should libraries focus on our diminished purchasing power or our increased partnerships with faculty?

Introduction and Background

In late spring 2011, Oregon State University Faculty Senate Library Committee (FSLC) asked the Collection Development Unit (CD) to present examples of the types of data we track. The FSLC had expressed interest in learning about and using this data to advocate for an increase to the collections budget in the new fiscal year. Two members of the Collection Development Unit presented a range of data FSLC could use to tell the libraries' story to the Faculty Senate, campus administration, and other stakeholders. Presentations were made in May and again in October 2011 due to changes in the Committee's membership. Here, we provide an overview of data presented. We also explore questions such as which data best promote the libraries and tell our story; how can collections assessment data be used to strengthen the case for a better budget; and, should libraries focus on their diminished purchasing power or increased partnerships with faculty.

A rising tide of demands is being placed on Oregon State University Libraries (OSUL) collections. Oregon State University's "ambitious drive to rank among the ten best Land Grant universities in the nation;" re-definition of signature areas on campus; the recent hiring of 80 new faculty; and, persistent inflation—all exert their individual demands on existing collections while highlighting new needs and growth areas (Oregon State University Administrative Leadership, 2011). To rise and meet these challenges, increased funding is needed.

OSU Libraries has a good track record of managing its collections budget. The electronic resources are well used; less used print resources are incorporated into our strategy to move to a digital environment. All are tied to curricular and research needs, and are continuously evaluated with an eye towards letting go of unused resources. However, there has not been a significant increase to the base budget since 2005 when OSUL's percentage from grants awarded to OSU researchers was increased. The idea to advocate for an increase in the OSUL's budget arose when the library was going through a University-wide accreditation and search process for a new University Librarian (Chadwell, personal communication). The FSLC's primary role is to advise the University librarian and their standing rules outline several ways they do this. Most pertinent here is the focus on "meeting the learning, instruction, and resource needs of students, faculty and staff" (Oregon State University Faculty Senate, 2011). Composed of nine faculty members representing multiple disciplines, three student members (one undergraduate and one graduate) and the University Librarian, this committee is dedicated to advocating on the libraries behalf so it is natural that they would extend this to the budget. FSLC is well-positioned on campus as a standing committee of the Faculty Senate and because of its broad representation on campus.

Inspiration from Others

Many libraries face these same issues so there is much to be learned from others experiences. After presenting to the FSLC, we realized that just presenting data would not be enough. To assist the FSLC effectively advocate we felt we needed to tie data to stories that would resonate on campus with

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a variety of audiences. To learn more about this and how others have approached working with a stakeholder group to advocate on their behalf, we turned to the literature.

Much is written about libraries demonstrating their value, measuring their impact, assessing library services, calculating a return on investment (ROI) and more. Good starting points include Oakleaf (2010), Horowitz (2009) and Bobal, Mellinger, and Avery (2008). Farrell's (2011) excellent description of faculty advisory boards, their development, role, membership, governance and management describes why and how to work with this stakeholder group. Since little is written specifically about working with a faculty senate library committee to increase a library collection's budget, we focus on works key to the development of this presentation and our thinking.

A common approach to showing libraries value is presenting "data by use (transactions), input (costs) and output (circulation, visitation)" (Holt, 2006, p. 128). However, this data does not do a good job of articulating the impact and value a library has to its parent institution. Holt (2006) offers seven helpful guidelines about evaluating a library's performance and value (p. 130). Pertinent concepts include: identifying how the library impacts its community; finding out what data resonates with stakeholders, and deciding how findings will be communicated out (Holt, 2006, p. 130).

Determining and using a library's ROI to show a library's value imparts more meaning than transaction based data. Devising the ROI of library resources shows "that academic library collections help faculty be productive and successful; libraries help generate grant income; and electronic collections are valued by faculty and bring value to the university" (Tenopir, 2010, p.46). However, relying solely on ROI is ill-advised. Libraries need to validate existing ROI studies to ensure that these measures are reliable since this work is still "in its infancy" (Kaufman, 2008, p. 227-8). In addition because library e-content appears to be easily quantifiable, libraries may over focus on equating our value with our collections and under focus on developing an overall picture of our value (Kaufman, 2008, p. 228). "There is much new ground to be broken" (Kaufman, 2008, p. 231) to show the totality of a library's value using ROI.

Libraries will likely benefit from using ROI along with other methods. "The benefit of multiple methods is that numbers in and of themselves rarely tell the full story. Interviews and surveys allow the faculty to tell their story of how they use the library in their grant proposal process, in teaching, and in their research and work life" (Tenopir, 2010, p. 46). Key to transforming data from numbers into a story is contextualizing the data; developing that context "into an argument for change," and visually representing the data (Elguindi, 2009, p.25). "Data can tell stories for you, and it can lead your audience to new interpretations that may surprise you and, in turn, further spur your thinking" (Elguindi, 2009, p.25). Developing a story around data "is like beginning a conversation" and management of that conversation ensures clear and readily understandable communication (Elguindi, 2009, p. 33).

Murphy and Keller (2011) discussed how performance metrics led to a story about their changing community demonstrating Queens Library value. They saw decreased circulation counts of Chinese language materials. After further study, they learned that due to changes in China, these materials were more readily available from local stores; new technology reduced the number of items in a set (so less circulation), and a demographic study revealed a decreasing Chinese community and growing community of people from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Library data linked with other measures resulted in improved collections and budget decisions.

It is essential to be able to show the existing budget is being managed wisely because "It costs the library more to stand still" due to inflation (Wooley, 1983, p.203). Wooley (1983) challenges libraries and their supporters-library committees-to be better managers and politicians when seeking additional funding (p.203). He recommends libraries ensure they are using their budgets wisely before asking for an increase and offers several questions to consider such as whether more selective ordering could be implemented and if non-recurring library costs of new courses could be identified (Wooley, 1983, p.203).

Explicitly linking the library and library resources to curricular changes and institutional directions is also key before asking for additional funds. Using holistic collection development (HCD), Chicago's Saint Xavier University library transformed its budget to reflect university academic priorities, not the library's organizational structure (Kusik & Vargas, 2009, p. 186). Saint Xavier library sought collections driven by the curriculum, a budget organized to eliminate inefficiencies, and an efficient mix of information resources (Kusik & Vargas, 2009, p. 188). It was also important that their allocation of collections funds made sense. Saint Xavier determined that for them faculty assignments (FTE) "are a significant measure of its educational priorities" and matched their collection funding accordingly (Kusik & Vargas, 2009, p. 188). A possible consideration to an HCD approach is looking at how to meet expanding interdisciplinary needs, an unexamined question.

Rossman's (2011) Electronic Resources and Libraries (ER&L) presentation suggests story lines to link with quantitative data, including:

- "Cost avoidance for users"
- "Quick access to research materials"
- "Increased faculty publishing activities"
- "Attracting faculty" and
- "Contributing to/furthering the mission/strategic plan of the institution" (slide 15).

Library data, values, and goals combine with story lines such as these to create a rich story. Also at the 2011 ER&L conference, the presentation "Making Data Work: Telling Your Story with Usage Statistics (Levine-Clark, Brook-Kieffer, and McDonald), Brooks-Kieffer encouraged libraries to "produce memorable, usable information" by building a story with the audience, scope and outlet (slide 8).

The Data

Just as we are hearing more now about assessment of campus and library services, collection development librarians are too changing how they view, interpret, and present collection data.

Traditionally, libraries sought to evaluate their collections in comparison to a perceived standard or potential. For example, collections would be compared to peer libraries' holdings or title lists of publications in various subject areas. Data for the purpose of evaluation were typically broken into two broad categories: collection centered and use (or user)-centered data. Libraries still do this; however, it is essential to do more. As a profession, we know that no one library—not even the best—can seek to own a truly comprehensive collection. We are more likely to focus on what we can provide access to regardless of whether we have purchased, leased, or borrowed the materials that make up the "collection." We are not limited to traditional collection evaluation, but instead want to demonstrate the impact our collections have on our users' research and teaching activities. Ranking among libraries is less relevant as we focus more on how we are serving our users on a dynamic campus. In contrast to evaluation that suggests we compete with peers, we are more likely to proactively look to other libraries' collections for the purpose of mutually beneficial resource sharing and collaborative development.

Data Available

We know what data can potentially help us do, but which data sources do we have at our disposal to actually answer these questions? And, how do we articulate what the data show in a way that helps a library compete for scarce university resources? We felt we could help our cause with a more thorough review of the data available, while considering how each tells something important about the current state of our existing collection. Working with the FSLC, we had a practical opportunity to use the information gathered. Below, we highlight a few example data sources (Figure 1) that we used in our conversations with the FSLC. Our list is not meant to be comprehensive. Additionally, we selected the category headers—"use-based", "budget", and "collection gaps"—to suit the purposes of our project. Some data fit into several categories. Another library might find completely different descriptors more beneficial. What other data sources might you use in your library? How could you categorize them to help focus your message?

Below, we describe some of the data listed in Figure 1, with an eye to providing insight into how we incorporate it into our work with the FSLC.

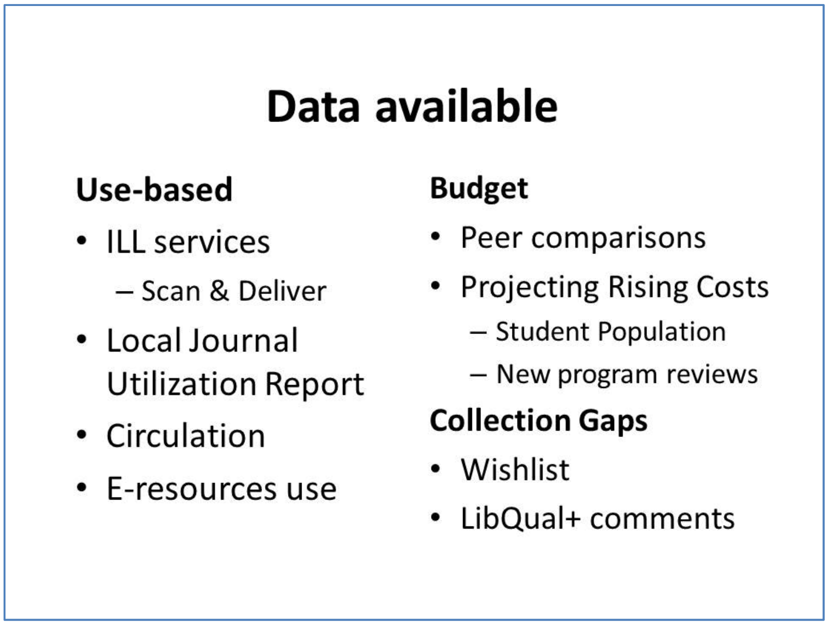

Figure 1

Use-Based

In this category we capture areas that demonstrate use through library transactions as well as one dataset that captures use through scholarly publishing activities. For the former, we highlight Scan and Deliver, while recognizing that circulation counts and electronic resources downloads are also time-tested and readily available data. In the latter category, we looked to the Local Journal Utilization Report to help us track citations and publishing.

Scan and Deliver

One example of use-based data is from a new service, Scan and Deliver. This document delivery service fills users' requests of materials from OSU Libraries print holdings such as print journal articles and book chapters. OSUL's Resource Sharing unit scans the request into a pdf and delivers it via email. The service uses our existing interlibrary loan (ILL) software to submit, manage and respond to requests and the same staff that processes ILL requests.

Table 1 shows that our users would use online access if we had it for the psychology titles listed and shows the point at which our online subscription ends for the Journal of Wildlife Management. Notably all of the psychology titles are in the PsycARTICLES collection-a long wished for collection. Using this data we could analyze the cost to subscribe to the online version compared to the cost to scan and deliver the item. Depending on the outcome we may find that it's either less expensive or an equivalent cost to cancel the print and subscribe to the online journal. With this data we could craft a story around increasing research productivity and saving researchers' time. If our users can have real-time access to these resources, in theory they would be more productive. In disciplines like the health sciences-this story may resonate with researchers who are pressed to meet grant deadlines.

Most Requested Print Title 5/10-5/2011	Number of Requests
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	165
Journal of Wildlife Management	155
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology	109
Journal of Counseling Psychology	82
Psychological Bulletin	82

Table 1: Most requested Scan and Deliver titles

Local Journal Utilization Report

The Local Journal Utilization Report (LJUR) is a product available for purchase from Thomson Reuters (http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science/science_products/a-z/local_journal_utilization_report/). It provides data on which journals a university's authors are publishing in, which journals they cite, and which journals cite their work. LJUR is helpful for tracking campus publication trends as well as informing serials cancellation processes (Wilde, 2010). Additionally, for our purposes, we see LJUR as data that help us appraise journals requested by patrons.

Budget

When talking with FSLC, we offered two examples demonstrating how our flat budget does not hold up over time. The first scenario simply compares our budget to the budgets of peers identified by OSU administration for strategic planning purposes. Our second goal within this category was to articulate how the current collections budget is or could be stretched to support areas that may not be readily identified as potential collections expenses.

These demands on the existing budget, some of which are external (e.g. inflation), some of which support innovation (e.g. discovery tools and supporting open access), and some caused by institutional changes (e.g. new faculty, more students, revised curriculum), contribute to our expected rising costs. Depending on the source of funds (base budget, gift money, student fees, etc.), these expenses may compete for the same monies as the library's more traditional collections—now or in the future. As with inflation, we can evaluate how our costs are affected by these changes.

Student Population Growth and PsycARTICLES

In 2011, OSU expected to reach 25,000 students (headcount) for the first time as more regional community college students finish the first segment of their undergraduate programs and transfer to OSU (Cole, 2011).

PsycARTICLES, a product of the American Psychological Association (APA) for OSU, is an example of a resource that exemplifies many of the data sources described in this article. In addition to being a good example of how student population changes can affect pricing, it:

- Was on the wishlist for several years
- Became the subject of renewed interest when psychology program changes were underway
- Included the most requested print titles via Scan and Deliver (as discussed above)

In fall of 2010 OSU's FTE was 19,877. By the time we renew PsycARTICLES again, our population will likely have reached 20,000 FTE which places us in the next pricing tier and means an increase of over $6500 per year (nearly a 30% increase).

This information is not meant to reflect poorly on APA or the PsycARTICLES product. APA thankfully makes their pricing structure clear (APA). Unfortunately, this is not always the case and keeping track of when a library enters a new pricing tier

(FTE-based or otherwise determined), a library could be in for a surprise come renewal time.

Clearly articulating how changing campus demographics puts library resources in tandem with both the benefits of an increased student body as well as shared growing pains is perhaps most important for our work with the FSLC. We hear concerns regularly about student-faculty ratios, lack of classroom space, student housing, and parking. Within the library we see increased use of services and resources such as lines for learning commons computers and study rooms, but perhaps a little less obvious is the impact that all the new students have on our collections budgets. We expect that the PsycARTICLES product will be heavily used and therefore likely to hold its own in the next serials review, but finding the additional $6500 from the current budget will prove difficult.

New Program Reviews

When a new program is proposed at OSU, it goes through a Category I process. The group recommending the new or revised program is required, among other things, to evaluate how well the current library collections and services support the program. Librarians must complete this portion, not the faculty sponsoring the program. A description of the Category I process is available in Bobal, Mellinger, and Avery (2008).

This opportunity to conduct a review of the library holdings, in a subject area that may or may not have been supported previously, is a valuable opportunity to identify gaps in collections. In addition to taking the new program's unique needs into account, we also look to peers with similar programs to help identify resources we may be lacking.

At the time they are written, Category I library evaluations share small snippets of our story (such as innovative resource sharing programs, existing electronic and print resources as well as those that are lacking) to an external audience. However, reviewed as a group, they can tell slightly different stories. Together they could demonstrate:

- the funding needed to support all of the new programs
    - one-time needs and ongoing costs
- patterns in the types of resources lacking overall (databases, monographs, etc.)
- specific resources lacking (would the same database support more than one new program?)

For the purposes of working with the FSLC, we chose to highlight the potential library costs associated with recent program proposals. From 2009 to early 2011, nineteen Category I proposals were sent to the library. Of these, nine included recommendations for funding of new library resources (Table 2). If approved, startup funds would come from the department for up to three years. Some funding requests are for bringing book collections up to par and a single influx of money to do so works well. Other reviews indicate a need to subscribe to essential databases and journals. If the costs are ongoing, the startup funds are a temporary solution since once the support lapses, the library absorbs the costs.

Program	Resource	Cost (initial)	Cost (ongoing)	Year
Earth Sciences (BS)	Encyclopedias and Journals	$12,600	$ 3,500	2011
Business Admin (MS)	Ebooks	$ 2,000	$ 2,000	2011
Public Policy (PhD)	Database	$10,400	$ 10,400	2011
Communication (MA)	Books and Journals	$ 5,433	$ 5,433	2010
Energy Engineering (BS)	Books and Journals	$ 5,400	$ 5,400	2010
Medical Humanities (Cert)	Books and Journals	$ 1,695	$ 655.	2010
F/W administration (MS)	Databases and Ebooks	$ 5,350	$ 5,350	2010
Sustainability dual degree (BA/BS)	Society membership	$ 1,500	$ 1,500	2010
Natural Resources (MS)	Books, Journals, and Databases	$21,500	$ 9,500	2009
Total		**$65,878**	**$ 43,738**	

Table 2: Category I proposals with library funding costs 2009-April 2011

Collection Gaps

Category I data can be used to highlight budget questions as well as collection gaps. OSU Libraries also uses a wishlist to track gaps and will build off of results from a recent LibQUAL+® Lite survey. While data detailing resources that faculty and students would like the library to add is meaningful because it shows what they would use for their research and instructional needs, libraries know the list can be never-ending. Despite this, identifying and tracking what is wanted readies a library for purchases if funds become available.

Wishlist

The wishlist is exactly that - a list of resources users and librarians have identified as important to the OSU community. As requests come to subject librarians or the Collection Development Unit, items are added to a Microsoft Access database. Entries contain basic information about the resource including cost and supplier, but also information about the context of the request and the anticipated use (research, classwork). If the user making the request does not include some detailed information about why the product is needed, the subject librarian typically asks for it.

In addition to using individual entries in the wishlist as a source of possible purchases when money becomes available, we also look at this list in the aggregate. Doing so highlighted to our FSLC colleagues the number and magnitude (in dollars) of the requests over the years, as well as the variety of requests received (many subject areas), and that the need spans both research and teaching. Lastly we can use the wishlist to show resources that have been added through strategic use of one-time funds, through cancellations of other poorly used resources, and collaborative purchases.

LibQUAL+® Data and Comments

Data from the LibQUAL+® survey can be used to identify where users perceive or experience gaps in a library collection. LibQUAL+® results can also be a rich source of qualitative data—vignettes and quotes from users to illustrate the human aspect of stories. Administered by the Association of Research Libraries, "LibQUAL+® is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality" (Association of Research Libraries, 2011). Twenty-two core questions measure users' perceptions of libraries' service quality. Results show the gap between users' minimum, desired and perceived service levels.

In addition to better understanding users, LibQUAL+® aims to “foster a culture of excellence in providing library service; collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time; provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions; and, enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data,” among other goals (Association of Research Libraries, 2011, General Information).

In spring 2011, OSU Libraries conducted the Lite protocol which “uses item sampling methods to gather data on all 22 LibQUAL+® core items, while only requiring a given single user to respond to a subset of the 22 core questions” (Association of Research Libraries, 2011, p. 13). Responses to questions about OSU Libraries collections, which come under the Information Control category, elicited the most concerning results. Faculty results summarized in Table 3 plot the aggregate mean score of faculty responses to their perceived, desired and minimum scores in all categories (Association of Research Libraries, 2011, p. 70). Question IC 8 ‘Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work’ addresses collections specifically and results show a -.60 adequacy mean. Drilling into the data by discipline we see that faculty in the College of Liberal Arts are particularly unsatisfied with OSU’s collections. While this isn’t surprising given OSU’s long-standing focus on the sciences, the libraries plan to query Liberal Arts faculty in 2012 to learn more in order to address their dissatisfaction.

ID	Question Text	Minimum Mean	Desired Mean	Perceived Mean	Adequacy Mean	Superiority Mean	n
IC-8	Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work	7.13	8.33	6.53	-0.60	-1.80	30

Table 3: Core Questions Summary for Faculty

LibQUAL+® results can be filtered in several ways: by user group: faculty, graduates, undergraduates; by category: Information Control, Affect of Service, Library as Place; or, by question. All contribute to a library’s story and are particularly strong in telling the story from the user’s perspective. Add to this comments such as, “I wish the library had access to more online journals. Interlibrary loan is wonderful but having instant access to more journals would facilitate learning” and a story becomes much more engaging. Comments touched on familiar themes of appreciation for the library along with desires for more content:

> “The library's biggest flaw is the lack of e-books. Everyone has smartphones, e-readers, & tablets & we want e-books for loan!”

> “The most valuable service that the library offers me is access to online databases of journals and technical articles. I am very satisfied with the library website search capabilities; I just wish we had more articles. I am successful at finding a lot, but there are also a lot that I can't access because we don't have subscriptions to them”

> "The library service is improving...it was very frustrating to do a research project remotely with a paper due in a week and not be able to access information soon enough”

Faculty Senate members liked reading the comments. They elucidated users’ experiences in a way that the quantitative data does not. FSLC members also indicated that the comments would assist with crafting stories that would resonate with their audiences’ experiences.

Moving Forward

During our second meeting with the Faculty Senate Library Committee, we asked for initial reactions to the data presented. There were not a whole lot of responses, but those who did share gave helpful feedback. The most surprising moment was when a faculty member focused on status by suggesting that we look at libraries with similar budgets and see if they are considered institutional peers, aspirational peers or, in his words whether OSU administrators and faculty would consider them "completely inferior". While we forgot that status is important to some of our stakeholders, it is a strategy to consider even though we may choose to word it differently. Others focused on the comments and appreciated the perspectives shared by our users.

Another reaction was an anecdotal comment about potential new hires making an informal comparison of our holdings to their home institution and concern about not having comparable resources. Given their initial reactions, maybe there is completely different data and stories that they feel would more effectively speak to their peers on campus. FSLC initial reactions suggest stories focused on faculty retention and peer comparison might resonate among faculty. During the 2011 Charleston Conference for this presentation, audience members offered additional suggestions. Some are echoed in Rossman's 2011 ER&L presentation. All are presented here:

- Faculty and student retention (either compared to peers or provide examples of loss of talent due to lack of resources)
- Increased grant activity and research funding (show how access to library resources impacts funding)
- Link the library's impact to the parent institution's mission and vision
- Find peer institutions who receive a similar amount of research dollars and compare library budgets (are they the same? more? less?)
- Compare the percentage of research dollars given to peer libraries (is the percentage the same? more? less? are the library budgets overall the same, more or less?)
- Compare libraries with same budget (are the parent institutions at the same research level? is the amount of research money coming into the institution the same? do the institutions have the same number of faculty? how do the rankings of programs or of the university overall compare?)

From these a variety of stories could be created; might this be an effective strategy for the FSLC? Given the variety of story lines and data that can be culled, it is possible to not only craft multiple stories but also to tailor them by audience, scope and outlet as indicated by Brooks-Kieffer (2011) and Rossman (2011). As of this writing, the Collection Development Unit anticipates working with the FSLC to identify which data and at what level of detail will best garner support among faculty and administrators. Faculty for example may prefer detailed data, while an overview may be better for university administrators Brooks-Kieffer (2011). At OSU, our outlets include Faculty Senate meetings, meetings between our University Librarian and university provosts, and informal conversations between FSLC members and the faculty they encounter in their daily work.

With this overview of data and possible stories, we revisit these questions:

- Which data best promotes the library and tells our story? What resonates with you?
- How can collections assessment data be used to strengthen our case for a better budget?
- Should libraries focus on diminished purchasing power or increased partnerships with faculty?
- Who are your advocacy groups on campus?
- What are your library's connections to that group?
- What kind of story could you tell with this data? Which data would you choose to tell your story?
- Which data help you advocate on your campus?

While the context for responding to these questions is unique to each library and its parent institution, much can be learned from sharing successful and unsuccessful strategies.

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