People Profile: Anjana H. Bhatt

Editor

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fine “usage” in such various ways as accessing the homepage of the e-resource, downloading a full text article, or simply accessing table of contents/abstract/or full text (McDowell & Gorman). Keeping in line with protecting user’s privacy they also avoid collecting data on user behavior. Most vendors provide information on number of sessions or searches but in reality a user might have logged in repeatedly to do the same search for a variety of reasons (system failure, interrupted work session, too many simultaneous users), so this information is of dubious utility.

Time period of usage statistics is another concern. Some vendors (e.g., StatUSA) do not keep statistics for more than six months on their Website and do not even bother to provide the previous data on demand. Most vendors provide the ability to choose a time period for data retrieval, but in some cases it is not possible to choose a specific time period or to pull up data for more than one year in a single report in order to analyze the changing usage patterns. One has to be content with whatever time periods are available. There are different standards for the time limit and the number of clicks that vendors count may result in the counting of one usage as multiple usages. It takes considerable time to check individual e-resource’s Website and collect this information for presenting it in a suitable format for ensuring a proper analysis. Merging this data together for a realistic analysis in the absence of qualified staff is another problem that many libraries face. Most libraries prefer to access the raw data available on the vendor’s Website but hesitate to compile it for comparison purposes as they are not sure about what would best suit the institutional needs. Even though standardization is a critical factor, vendors have to realize individual needs of libraries and must provide abilities to customize the data (McDowell & Gorman).

How realistic is it, then, to assess e-collections with the help of — unfortunately ever so inadequate and difficult to measure — usage statistics data? During my tenure of just one and half years as an e-resources librarian, I have come across three incidents of vendors reporting inaccurate of their usage data. When libraries have no control in collecting data and can not identify consistent under, or, over counts (Luther, Shim & McClure) how wise is it to trust the validity of the usage statistics for making informed decisions? Until usage statistics produce meaningful data that can be interpreted in some sensible ways, libraries can not depend solely on this information to make collection assessment decisions.

The broader question, however, is this: how much do usage statistics really matter when every reader has his/her resources and every e-resource has its user? At best, the usage statistics for any given e-resource tell nothing more than how many articles were downloaded or how many search sessions were initiated. Did the user find what he or she was looking for? Do hit counts reflect the quality of the articles? And for growing universities, is it realistic to stop subscribing to costly, possibly lesser-used databases that might be required for program accreditation purposes, for important faculty research, or which are critically important to one or two programs? For example, at FGCU, we pay $20,000 for Research Insight software because this e-resource has its users

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