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Dudley was looking for context, and she got it. “We realized that our NetLibrary eBooks filled the subject gaps we identified. We then found people were using them frequently. This opens up our acquisition thinking.”

William Woods used the service to do peer-to-peer comparisons and bolster academic subject strengths.

Southeastern Oklahoma State University

The state school in Durant, Oklahoma, supports more than 4,000 students in 19 undergraduate programs and five graduate programs. But the library struggled to maintain a consistent collection development scheme. “We never knew with certainty how well our titles supported the academic program,” says Collection Development Librarian Susan Webb.

With WorldCat Collection Analysis, they had the necessary data to make curriculum-supporting decisions to assist an accreditation review. WorldCat Collection Analysis opened her eyes. “You don’t realize how heavily a collection might be slanted toward a department until you look at it in detail. And you can’t dispute it because it’s there in black and white,” says Webb.

For Southeastern, using the individual collection analysis portion of the service contributed to the institutional accreditation procedures.

Virginia Tech

With more than 2.2 million titles in its libraries, Virginia Tech had lots of questions about its collection — especially because it was spread among a main library and three specialty branches, explained Paul Metz, Director of Collection Management. Virginia Tech is a member of ASERL, the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries — the largest regional library consortium in the country. Through ASERL, Virginia Tech could analyze its own collections, as well as compare them to 13 doctoral institutions that were custom-selected as a peer group for Virginia Tech.

With the new service, Metz reports he is able to “speak empirically, comparatively and in detail, whereas without it I could only have been speculative or very general.” He has led the effort to look at collections on a large scale, down to a very granular level. “It gives us the ability to make smarter decisions about what’s needed in our collections.”

Virginia Tech used WorldCat Collection Analysis to gain an overall sense of what’s in its collections and determine gaps and overlaps with peer institutions.

Triangle Research Libraries Network

The four universities that make up the Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN) include North Carolina State University, Duke University, North Carolina Central University and University of North Carolina. A task group was formed to oversee a consortial project using WorldCat Collection Analysis to learn about the overlap, uniqueness and gaps in the collections of TRLN libraries, especially when viewed as one aggregate collection.

The initial findings of the study were quite surprising. Based on the 5,158,309 OCLC holdings included in the overlap study, only 2 percent of the records overlap at all four institutions. Seventy-one percent of the aggregate TRLN collection, it turns out, are unique to a single institution. When viewed as a whole, then, the collection in this geographic area is quite strong indeed.

Cooperative, collaborative collection development was what made WorldCat Collection Analysis so appealing to the TRLN consortia.

Surprising Uses: Preservation, Digitization, Music and Languages

Looking at a library’s collection for gaps, overlaps, strengths and weaknesses is one of the main uses for WorldCat Collection Analysis. But libraries have also used it in surprising ways. For example, Shirley Baker, Vice Chancellor, Information Technology and Dean, University Libraries of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, is using it to drive a preservation and digitization project.

Her library staff has compared their collection with two of the libraries that participate in the Google book digitization project. They found that 150,000 public domain works held by their library would eventually be freely available through Google, but that...