Library Analytics: Shaping the Future — SAGE Publishing in the Age of Data

John McDonald
EBSCO Information Services, johnmcdonald@ebsco.com

Kathleen McEvoy
EBSCO Information Services, k.mcevoy@ebsco.com

Kristen Tepfer
SAGE Publishing, Kristen.Tepfer@sagepub.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Library Analytics: Shaping the Future — SAGE Publishing in the Age of Data

by **Kristen Tepfer** (Senior Marketing Manager, SAGE Publishing, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320:
Phone: 805-410-7322) <Kristen.Tepfer@sagepub.com> *www.sagepub.com*

Column Editors: **John McDonald** (EBSCO Information Services) <johnmcdonald@ebsco.com>

and **Kathleen McEvoy** (EBSCO Information Services) <k.mcevoy@ebsco.com>

In nearly 12 years of working at **SAGE Publishing**, I am struck by how infinitely more complex the conversations around data have become. Some time ago, electronic resources were just taking center stage and the ability to see how many downloads a journal article got was enough. Now, librarians are expected to make purchasing decisions based on cost per use, use quantitative measures to show levels of student success, and compile data from hundreds of disparate publisher reports to deduce trends. The challenges abound for centralizing data, equalizing reports, and creating clean and impactful visualizations; and librarians aren't the only ones stretched to keep up. Publishers must meet these expectations as well.

One way **SAGE** is responding to the increased need for data evidence is by dedicating a team to curating and presenting meaningful data in a visual report called the Customer Value Report (CVR). The **SAGE** CVR is hand-crafted and customized by institution and features multiple metrics including usage, turnaways, faculty reactions, and more, in a graphic, distributable report. "Our Librarian customers always needs to show the value of their investments, so they are so pleased to get this report and want to share it with their group. They love that it's visual and helps them show the value of what they spend with **SAGE**," said **Anne Fulton**, **SAGE** Library Sales Manager.

Our aim in creating the CVR is to help reveal, for our librarian customers, the way their campus is engaging with our content. In connecting with more than 800 libraries globally over the course of three years, based on their feedback, we believe we have achieved the right balance of information that is useful to them. We also hope that this helps them to be informed when considering where they might invest in more resources. We are transparent in what we provide in these reports, including usage data accessible to librarian account administrators for download and comparison.

The value of the **SAGE** CVR is in the data being collected and analyzed without any heavy-lifting on the part of the librarian. It's in the data trends provided in feature boxes, the faculty product feedback gathered by **SAGE**, and essentially the hard to reach and review hard data that is being required of the librarian to find and distribute.

Many librarians have shared that it saves them time in conveying product interest to colleagues and other decision makers when they are able to circulate this comprehensive report. "I wish all my vendors would do this — it would make my job a lot easier since I do this type of analysis and reporting for all the resources we have in the library"—Librarian **Rebecca Frenandez**, Head of Electronic Resources and Collection Development at the **University of Texas at Tyler**. The **SAGE** CVR also helps them see where to encourage higher usage of resources among students and faculty.

During a **2017 Charleston Conference** session I attended called "Use what you've got," the **SAGE** CVR was presented with praise by **Dave Tyckoson**, Subject Librarian from **CSU Fresno**. It was mentioned that the report gives librarians information they might not otherwise have access to, that they can use to liaise with faculty. **Kimberley Robles-Smith**, Collection Development Director at **CSU Fresno**, said she chose to showcase the **SAGE** CVR for its visually pleasing and comprehensive representation of their data, and its useful faculty information. She also sees value in the faculty contributors to **SAGE** journals and books that were provided, as she thought it would be useful for those on campus who are trying to mentor students. "Some grad students, especially in the sciences, are being encouraged to get published before they graduate and it's good for them to see their professor's publications," she said.

For the **SAGE** CVR creation, we have a small staff in marketing that focuses on gathering, curating, and providing this data mostly for review with our Library Sales staff during campus meetings. Systems reporting provided by our Circulation department delivers the various data metrics we need to accomplish this. By going through this in-depth review of customer accounts, it helps us better understand their specific resource needs. The challenge in doing this on a larger scale is achieving the personalization required for us to deliver a quality CVR, which is why, for now, we focus on providing these in-depth visual reports to a core and scalable group of libraries in the U.S., EMEA, and APAC. However, upon customer request, we are happy to deliver extensive raw data files, including what is offered in the CVR.

In addition to what we deliver directly to customers, **SAGE** has several departments that are vigorously looking at data to help determine business directives. Analytics form an integral part of our product development cycle, by helping to shape our overall goals and objectives for our platforms and how we prioritize enhancements. In the current digital landscape we believe making informed, data-driven decisions is critical to ensuring our platforms truly meet the needs of our customers, publishing partners and end users as they evolve over time.

For example, in 2014, we discovered that there was a huge amount of usage on a small number of videos being accessed via our **SAGE** Research Methods product which was one of the determining factors in **SAGE's** decision to start producing our **SAGE** Video collections. More recently, usage has also played a role in our decisions to add updated video content to already launched video collections. Based on

high usage of particular videos in our **SAGE** Education Video Collection, it only made sense for us to go back to those **SAGE** exclusively produced videos and update them with even more content.

We use a continuous, iterative enhancement cycle for our platforms, and in prioritizing particular features/functionality for enhancement, we review the data in depth to identify pain points. For example, we are currently looking to ensure the article page layout for our journals platform is optimized by conducting an in-depth review of how users are currently interacting with the different page elements and combining this with qualitative data from user workshops and extensive testing. We're also piloting data analysis on text and citations in journals. Preliminary results are encouraging.

A challenge we face with our platforms is updating them as much and as quickly as we'd like. Following our analyses, our focus on data and user feedback helps us prioritize and ultimately ensures the areas of focus always represent the most-needed improvement from our users.

There truly has never been more data generated in the world than there is today. We leave digital data traces behind us as we move through our daily lives and this data provides rich insights and support decision making like never before, but also raise ethical questions about use of personal data. For librarians, publishers and academic researchers, the data around us is changing the way we work.

In this vein, in addition to providing librarians with the **SAGE** CVR, and using data analytics in product development, **SAGE** is fully immersed in the world of data (big and small) through new tools and resources that we publish for students, researchers and instructors. We recently launched a new initiative to look specifically at how big data and new technology is changing the way social science research is being conducted, **SAGE** Ocean (*ocean.sagepub.com*). **SAGE** Ocean will provide new types of resources for social scientists to promote methodological innovations, as well as practical tools and products for a new era of social science research.

The first product from **SAGE** Ocean is **SAGE** Campus, a series of online data courses to equip social researchers with the skills they need to conduct big data research. Course topics include Python, Data Visualization, and Qualitative Text Analysis, among others.

SAGE also recently announced the purchase of **Data-Planet**, a multidisciplinary data repository with the largest collection of organized statistical data. It is used across academic and public libraries and in government and commercial markets and further enables us to deliver statistical solutions to students and researchers in an evolving data world.

Working on key reporting and data visualization to deliver to our library partners is a rewarding, and at times challenging, endeavor for me; one I learn from every day. Thankfully I have been partnering with librarians who are advocates of what we are doing at **SAGE**, to help in this age of data requirements. They have shared with me the demands put on library staff to analyze large amounts of data, created compelling visuals, and found time in their already busy schedules to do all of that. At **SAGE**, we hope to help provide the solutions needed for librarians to accomplish these important goals. 🐋