LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The netLibrary transaction logs were not intended for identifying and analyzing the behaviors of the users, but to provide information about the load on the system and to troubleshoot when problems arise. Although the transaction logs provide a wealth of data, a researcher must sift through the data to determine what is useful for identifying user behaviors. This process is very time consuming.

As mentioned above, some data were not collected initially. This is the case for unique session identifiers, which were not logged prior to 2003. This required using the account ID to determine when a session began and ended. Using the account ID to determine a session can be misleading. If a user logs in at a public workstation, but fails to logoff of the workstation and another user accesses netLibrary at the workstation, with the previous user’s account ID, the transaction log will associate the entire session to one user, the first one.

netLibrary timestamps every record that is logged in the database, but all accesses are logged in Mountain Time since that is the time zone for netLibrary’s location. This becomes a problem when trying to determine relative global access times. For example, if a user in Athens, Greece, logged on to the site at 2:35 PM Eastern European Time (EET), the system would record the time as 5:35 AM MST.

This requires converting the system time to continued on page 89