SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on Public Services Metrics

http://www2.archivists.org/groups/saa-acrlrbms-joint-task-force-on-public-services-metrics

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About our charge: The SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Statistical Measures for Public Services in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries (full, official name) is responsible for development of a new standard defining appropriate statistical measures and performance metrics to govern the collection and analysis of statistical data for describing public services provided by archival repositories and special collections libraries.

Survey (please respond!): To gather information from archivists and special collections librarians about current practices and priorities for standardized measures for public services, the task force is requesting your input through a survey. ***The survey is available at goo.gl/dqWR0f and closes September 21, 2015***.

Statistical Domains: The task force is planning to develop measures and metrics around seven public service "domains":

1. Reading room visits
2. Collection use
3. Events and activities (instruction, tours, exhibits, etc.)
4. Users
5. Reference transactions (in-person and virtual)
6. Reproductions (including interlibrary loan)
7. Website (visits, downloads, etc.)

For each domain, the task force is drafting statistical guidelines that include definitions of relevant terms, a basic measure, an advanced measure, and recommended "performance" metrics to help repositories gauge their efficiency and effectiveness both locally and comparatively.

Sample Statistical Guideline: Reading Room Visits (draft!)

Basic measure ("Reader Days"):
Count the number of Reading Room Visits made by Registered Users during a 24-hour period, beginning and ending at midnight. Count each Registered User once and only once during the 24-hour period regardless of how many Visits s/he makes during the period and regardless of the visit length (*note*: this statistic is commonly referred to as "reader days").

Guidelines for collection:
● Reading Room Visits can be tallied manually by creating a daily list of individual Registered Users who enter the Reading Room, and then counting up the number of unique Registered Users who were admitted to the Reading Room that day.
● Visits can be tallied upon entrance or exit from the Reading Room (in properly managed security environment, the number of entrances and exits should, of course, be the same).

Application and examples:
- If a user is admitted to the reading room at 10:00am and works until noon, then signs out to take a lunch break, and then comes back at 1:30pm and works for another hour, count one visit only.
- If a user is admitted to the reading room at 10:00am, quickly consults one item, and then leaves at 10:15am for the rest of the day, count one visit.
- If a user is admitted to the reading room on one day and then returns the next day, count two visits.

Advanced measure ("Reader Hours"):

Calculate the cumulative time that a user spends in the Reading Room during a 24-hour period, beginning and ending at midnight. Record the measure in hours and minutes, hours and fractions of an hour, or minutes (*note*: this statistic is sometimes called "reader hours").

Guidelines for collection:
- This measure can be obtained by manually recording and tabulating values, but is more effectively obtained by entering reading room sign-in and sign-out times in a spreadsheet or an automated system that can calculate and report the total amounts of time that individual users spend in the reading room each day.

Application and examples:
- If a user is admitted to the reading room at 10:00am and works until noon, then signs out to take a lunch break, and then comes back at 1:30pm and works until 3:15pm, record a total visit length of 3 hours and 45 minutes, or 3.75 hours, or 225 minutes.
- If a user is admitted to the reading room at 9:00am on the first day and leaves at 11:00am, and then returns the next day at 10:00am and leaves at 12:30pm, record a visit length of 2 hours and 0 minutes, or 2.0 hours, or 120 minutes for the first visit, and then a visit length of 2 hours and 30 minutes, or 2.5 hours, or 150 minutes for the second visit.

Recommended metrics

Total visits per day
- Graphing the total number of visits per day over a given period of time can reveal usage patterns. For instance, at academic institutions, total daily visits might increase towards the end of the semester, when research papers are due.
- Comparing the total number of visits per day (or week or month) for multiple years in succession can reveal fluctuations in usage levels and trends.

Average number of visits per day
- Calculating the average number of visits per day for a given period can provide a useful baseline metric for comparing activity levels at different repositories. Reading room size and staffing needs would naturally be different at a repository that receives an average of 0.8 visits per day than one that receives 18 visits per day.

Additional measures and metrics might include: Average Visit Length, Unique Registered Users, Newly Registered Users, Ratio of Newly Registered Users to Total Users, etc.

Further questions or feedback regarding the task force's work? Contact co-chairs Amy Schindler (amycschindler@gmail.com) and Christian Dupont (christian.dupont@bc.edu).