The VALUE of Serials in Academic & Special Libraries

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THE VALUE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES
A Comprehensive Research Review and Report

Prepared by Dr. Megan Oakleaf, Syracuse University
for the Association of College and Research Libraries
What is **value** in the context of serials?
Satisfaction?
Typical:
23% of faculty are satisfied with the serials collection in their area of research.

So what?
Service Quality?
Typical:
65% of our users think our serials services are acceptable.

So what?
Inputs/Outputs?
Typical:
We increased the serials collection by X.

So what?
Usage?
Typical:
A lot of people downloaded a lot of things.

So what?
Typical:
A lot of people downloaded a lot of things.
We’re not sure who.
We’re not sure what things.
We’re not sure what they did with them.
If anything.

Seriously?
Commodity?
Typical:
The value of our serials collection = $$.
ROI $ ?
Typical:
We do more with less.

Then can I give you less again?
Typical:
We do more with less.
Well, we do about the same with less.

Ok...?
Typical:
We do more with less.
Well, we do about the same with less.
Uh, actually we do a lot less with less.

I didn’t notice....
Impact?
Impact: the value of serials in meeting the needs of users
Impact:
not how good is the serials collection,
but rather
how much good
do users do with the collection

Tell me more!
What do users do with the serials in your collection?
What do users do with the serials in your collection?
How much do you know about that?
Do they do the things your institution/organization values?
Context for Value
Context for Value:
institutional or organizational mission
goals
strategic priorities
focus areas

Tell me more!
What does your institution/organization care about?
Higher Ed Focus Areas: Student recruitment, enrollment

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Student GPA, test scores
Student learning outcomes

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Student retention, completion, graduation

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Student career success

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas: Alumni lifelong learning

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas: Faculty recruitment, tenure, promotion

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Faculty teaching

*What do serials contribute?*
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Faculty research productivity
Faculty patents, technology transfer
Faculty grant seeking
Faculty innovation, entrepreneurship

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Institutional prestige
Institutional efficiencies
Institutional accreditation, program review
Institutional brand
Institutional development, funding, endowments

What do serials contribute?
Higher Ed Focus Areas:
Local, global workforce development
Local, global economic growth

What do serials contribute?
Efficiency Focus Areas:

- Time savings
- Industrial productivity, Shortened product cycle
- Reduced parts costs, Labor savings
- Improved quality
- Increased sales
- Quicker response to threats
- Money saved over alternative sources
- Risk of inappropriate information decreased

*What do serials contribute?*
Corporate Focus Areas:
Proceed to the next step in a project
Decide upon a course of action
Improve organizational image
Improve client relationships
Exploit new opportunities
Avoid time lost, bad decisions, loss of funds

What do serials contribute?
Medical Focus Areas:
Handle patient care differently (diagnosis, choice of tests, choice of drugs, length of hospital stay, advice given)
Avoid hospital admissions, patient mortality, surgeries

What do serials contribute?
Have you thought of anything else?
# Activity #26: Library Impact Map

Library Services, Expertise, & Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Focus Area</th>
<th>Reference, Physical</th>
<th>Reference, Digital</th>
<th>Reference, Subject Guides</th>
<th>Reference, Roving</th>
<th>Reference, Embedded</th>
<th>Reference, Consultations</th>
<th>Outreach</th>
<th>Liaison Services</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Recruitment, Enrollment</td>
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<td>Student Retention, Completion, Graduation</td>
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<td>Student Career Success</td>
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<td>Student GPA, Test Achievement</td>
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<td>Student Learning Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Experience, Engagement</td>
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<td>Student-Faculty Academic Rapport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alumni Lifelong Learning</td>
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Impact!

Library Contributions in the form of Serials Services, Resources, & Expertise

Institutional or Organizational Needs, Goals, & Outcomes

Impact!
Think & Discuss

• What are the focus areas of your institution/organization?
• What serials services, expertise, and resources does the library offer?
• Where do these two things intersect?
• Use the handout if it helps.
What do we need to assess the value of serials in academic and special libraries?
The **mission**, goals, strategic priorities, or focus areas of the parent institution or organization.
Defined outcomes that describe the impact of library serials services, expertise, and resources on users, written in terms relevant to the parent institution or organization.
Better in-house data.
Better vendor data.
“Use” data.

What serial use is there?

Useful for correlating library behaviors with measures of institutional/organizational success.

But what we have right now is inadequate...
Individual level data.

We can aggregate individual data, but we can’t disaggregate group data.

We can clean personally identifiable information from data, but we can’t add it back in.
The Question of Correlation

**Surrogates for serials:**
- Library instruction
- Reference transactions
- Downloads
- ILL
- Other?

**Surrogates for outcomes:**
- Better grades
- More publications, grants, awards, tenure decisions
- Lives saved
- Cases won
- Profit gained
- Other?
Correlations

Writing “Value of Academic Library” Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library Service, Expertise, or Resource</th>
<th>Relationship Verb (Impact, Contribute to, Affect, Influence, Relate to, Cause, Determine, Help)</th>
<th>Institutionally Desirable Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does [library service, expertise, or resource]</td>
<td>Relationship Verb</td>
<td>Outcome aligned with institutional needs, strategic priorities, goals, outcomes, or mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways does [library service, expertise, or resource]</td>
<td>Relationship Verb</td>
<td>Outcome aligned with institutional needs, strategic priorities, goals, outcomes, or mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does [library service, expertise, or resource]</td>
<td>Relationship Verb</td>
<td>Outcome aligned with institutional needs, strategic priorities, goals, outcomes, or mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does [library service, expertise, or resource]</td>
<td>Relationship Verb</td>
<td>Outcome aligned with institutional needs, strategic priorities, goals, outcomes, or mission</td>
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http://meganoakleaf.info/valresearchquestions.pdf
The Question of Causation

• Umm...you can’t actually demonstrate causation, only infer it.
• Do we have the capability to isolate all variables?
• Do we have the need to say we are the only ones contributing to outcomes?
• Is it enough to describe the profile of successful users and seek to increase the number of users that emulate those attributes?
• What is our goal?
  – If it’s to “prove,” then we may “need” causal data.
  – If it’s to improve, we don’t.
“Use” data that doesn’t exist.

What use should there be based on the needs/requirements of the parent institution or organization, even if that use doesn’t currently exist?
First:
Identify an outcome that represents the intersection between institutional/organization mission and library services/expertise/resources.

Example: [Users] will be able to do [thing that the institution/organization values].
[Users] will be able to do [thing that the institution/organization values].

• Students will be able to evaluate information found in serials effectively.
• Faculty will be able to teach effectively using serials.
• Faculty will be able to complete competitive grant proposals using serial literature.
• Doctors will make more accurate diagnoses.
• Lawyers will win more cases.
Second:
Determine how you’ll know the outcome has been met. What data will you collect?

Put your assessment tool or methodology into action to get the data.

Critical Incident Technique? Correlation?
Third:
Report your assessment results to communicate your value!

Use the data to improve!
What should communications about serials value look like?
What do YOUR communications about serials look like?
Which conception of value are they predicated on?

- Satisfaction
- Service Quality
- Inputs/Outputs
- Usage
- Commodity
- Impact
What do your communications about serials look like?

How good we are?

• Good job teaching how to evaluate and use serials.
• Good job advising faculty where to place articles or determine their impact factor.
• Good job preparing bibs and exec summaries of serial lit for grant proposals.

How much good do users do with our serials?

• Get better grades.
• Graduate on time.
• Get more articles published.
• Get tenure.
• Get funded grants.
• Earn awards.
What if we could demonstrate the contribution of serials..

• To students completing **academic work** successfully and completing their **programs/degrees**?
• To actually learning how to be **good, lifelong, sophisticated users** of information?
• To quick and lucrative **employment** of students?
• To recruiting great **new faculty**?
• To improving **teaching**?
• To placing articles in the right **publications**?
• To the awarding of **grants**?
• To **tenuring and promoting** successful faculty members?
• To the **profile, prestige, reputation of the institution** in the global and local community?
More importantly...
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Identify situation of complexity → Decide to find solution

Seek information → Decide to act

Take action → Identify situation of complexity
Reflect on past experiences & interpret environment

Incorporate discoveries from action

Build knowledge through experimentation

Engage in inquiry to reduce doubt

Use reasoning to create new rules for action

PRAGMATISM
What if we could use what we learned about the contributions of serials...

- To teach users to be better, lifelong, sophisticated users of information?
- To help students do their work even more successfully and achieve their goals in greater numbers or more quickly?
- To assist students to gain faster and more lucrative employment?
- To recruit more and better new faculty?
- To help faculty produce more articles in higher-impact publications and get more and bigger grants?
- To the grow the profile, prestige, reputation of the institution/organization in the global and local community?