

Analysis and Evaluation of the Y Library Collection

Y Library is the academic library serving the University of X (UX) in [REDACTED]. UX is a four-year liberal arts college with an enrollment of approximately 2,600 students and offers “more than 40 majors, minors, and interdisciplinary programs” (UX, 2011a) as well as Master’s level graduate programs in [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] (UX, 2011b). UX students are 42% men and 58% women; 76% come from outside of [REDACTED], and 74% are Caucasian (UX, 2011a). There are 219 members of the faculty, and the student-to-faculty ratio is 11 to 1 (UX, 2011a). Y Library’s “primary mission is to support the teaching, research and scholarly activities of the University of [X]’s faculty, students, and staff” (UX, 2011d).

One useful technique for assessing an academic library collection such as Y’s is peer comparison. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides a peer comparison tool for academic libraries on its Web site (NCES, n.d.b). The tool allows for the comparison of multiple academic libraries by a number of variables, including geography, academic institution characteristics, expenditures, and size of collections. A comparison of the UX library with the libraries of 14 other Baccalaureate colleges with similar enrollment numbers (+ or – 5%) reveals some interesting findings.

Table 1, a screenshot of the report generated by the NCES comparison tool, provides a comparison of UX’s Y Library with 14 other institutions. Included in the table are total FTE 12-month enrollments; total library expenditures; total library expenditures per FTE student; current serial subscriptions—held; books, serial backfiles and other paper materials—held; electronic reference sources and aggregation services—held; and total interlibrary loans received.

Table 1

NCES Library Comparison (NCES, n.d.a)

Library Name	Total FTE 12-Month Enrollment	Total Library Expenditures	Total Library Expenditures Per FTE Student	Current Serial Subscriptions – Held	BOOKS, Serial Backfiles and Other Paper Materials – Held	Electronic Reference Sources and Aggregation Services – Held	Total Interlibrary Loans Received
Comparison Group Average	2,660	\$2,813,248	\$1,054.37	10,253	530,729	192	8,698
STATE AVERAGE (WA)	3,938	\$2,042,210	N/A	8,782	299,856	64	4,631
NATIONAL AVERAGE	3,659	\$2,066,113	N/A	7,949	321,685	1,030	3,247
Comparison Group Median	2,659	\$1,861,035	\$695.89	6,921	359,976	122	7,460
STATE MEDIAN (WA)	2,642	\$525,726	N/A	223	41,415	15	188
NATIONAL MEDIAN	1,471	\$286,856	N/A	185	40,404	19	116
Library Of Interest							
	2,664	\$2,586,039	\$970.74	47,450	527,640	119	18,852
	2,551	\$3,848,220	\$1,508.51	5,534	624,475	273	7,675
	2,576	\$2,703,501	\$1,049.50	2,451	501,043	122	10,273
	2,582	\$679,842	\$263.30	363	218,618	79	4,941
	2,601	\$1,950,883	\$750.05	11,394	390,003	121	17,923
	2,602	\$1,442,084	\$554.22	828	329,949	101	3,601
	2,633	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2,638	\$1,126,336	\$426.97	21,294	259,507	67	588
	2,680	\$4,960,211	\$1,850.82	7,302	791,936	293	15,687
	2,681	\$1,520,480	\$567.13	6,539	248,219	101	4,625
	2,710	\$3,161,019	\$1,166.43	9,275	416,595	286	7,244
	2,724	\$5,845,295	\$2,145.85	10,585	1,414,960	236	16,561
	2,749	\$4,749,914	\$1,727.87	46,065	1,199,361	484	14,337
	2,754	N/A	N/A	505	209,180	277	1,907
	2,760	\$1,771,187	\$641.73	11,157	295,629	54	7,714

Many conclusions can be drawn from this data. First, while the UX library exceeds the comparison group median in total expenditures, total expenditures per FTE student, holdings of both current serial subscriptions and books, serial backfiles and other paper materials, and total

interlibrary loans received, it ranks below the comparison group average in all of the same categories except current serial subscription holdings and total interlibrary loans received. In the latter two categories, it far exceeds the comparison group average. In fact, the UX library exceeds every other institution in the comparison group in these two categories. What conclusions can be drawn from this data? First, among academic libraries serving institutions of similar size and degree-granting status, UX stands out as a leader in the comprehensiveness of its serial subscriptions. Academic institutions, especially research-oriented institutions, use serials heavily, so the UX collection seems strong in this regard. Second, UX actively borrows materials from other institutions through interlibrary loan (ILL). The heavy use of ILL could signify weaknesses in the collection, but further analysis on the specific materials and types of materials borrowed would need to be conducted to draw specific conclusions. Y Library actively participates in the OCLC network as well as the [REDACTED] consortium, which includes 36 libraries in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and “relies on resource sharing, interlibrary loan and document delivery as an extension of the collection” (UX, 2011c). One way to interpret UX’s heavier-than-average usage of ILL is as a commitment to meeting the information needs of its users.

In the spring of 2010, Y Library participated in LibQUAL+, a national survey measuring perceptions of campus library services (UX, 2010). Among the survey’s findings regarding collections were a strong demand for database and journal access among faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students. Because of the strong demand for these materials from two of Y’s three primary user groups (faculty, students, and staff), it makes sense that the library would collect heavily and/or provide extensive access in this area. Other survey findings included comments such as, “ILL staff provide a high quality, essential service” and “many [graduate students] rely

heavily on interlibrary loan to complete their research” (UX, 2010). Clearly, the users of Y Library not only value but also depend upon ILL services. It therefore makes sense that Y’s total number of ILLs received would be high.

Overall, Y Library seems to be meeting the needs of the UX campus community. Through a combination of its own collecting activities and its participation in consortia such as the [REDACTED], the library is able to provide access to the materials its users need and demand. Library staff acknowledge that there is room for improvement in certain areas, and based on the information they provide on their Web site, they are committed to strengthening the collection and providing effective and responsive services.

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