

Sustainability through unsustainability:

A case study on the phases of development in library assessment activities

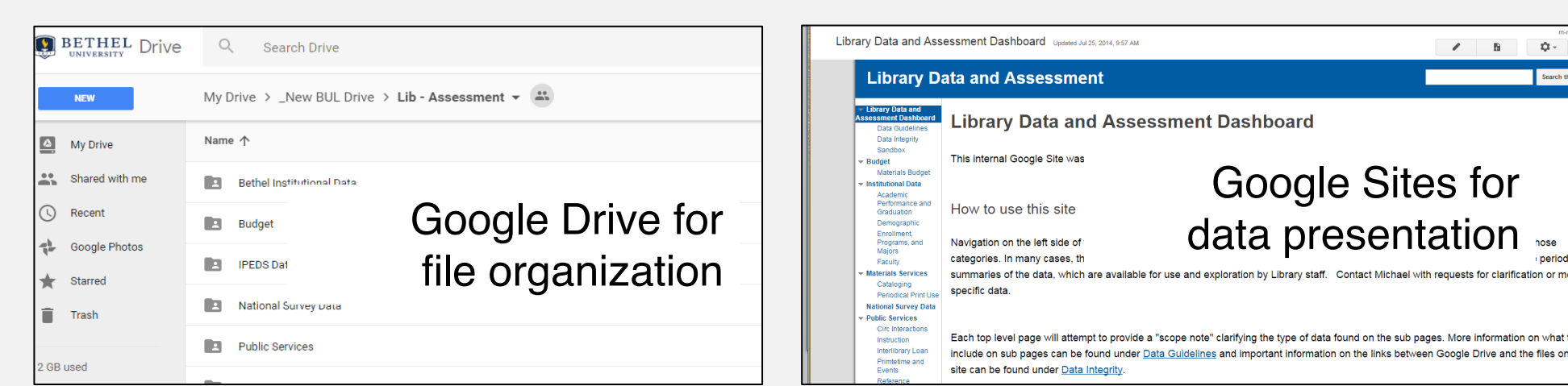
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Phase 1: Unsustainable past

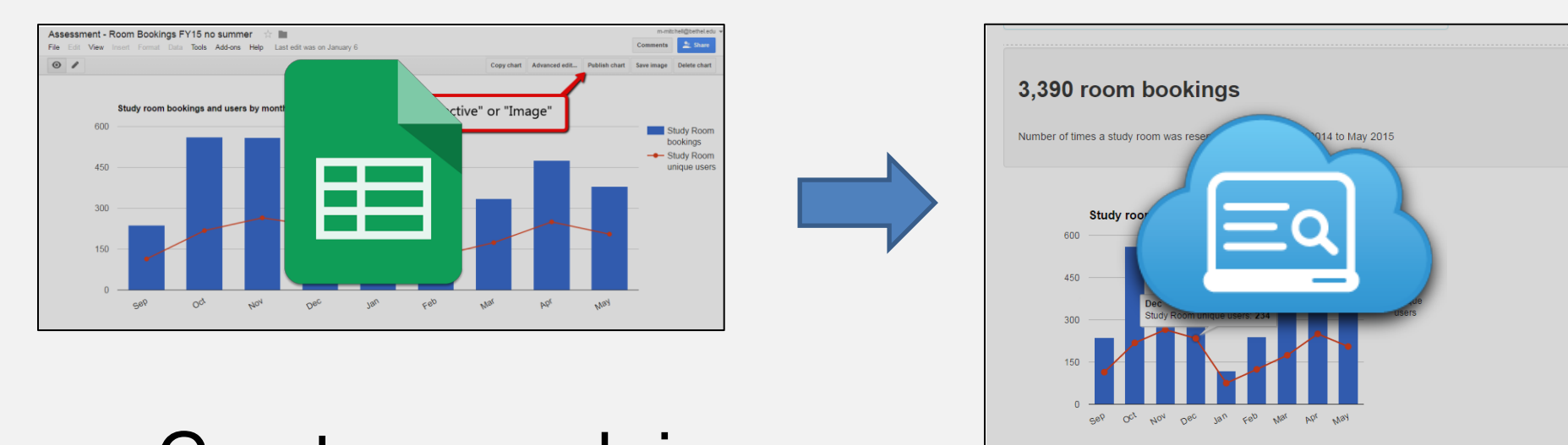
Early efforts

Google Sites as a dashboard

- Data from many sources/library departments
- Fed by multiple spreadsheets
- Maintained by one person
- Data available, but not interactive



Publish and embed graphs



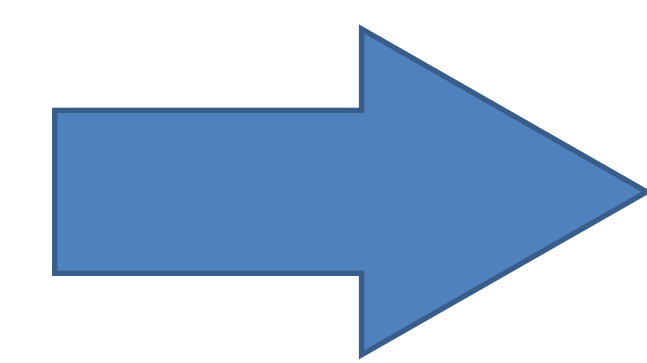
- Create a graph in Google Sheets
- Use “publish” tool to embed elsewhere
- Updates carry over automatically
- Graphs can be placed on other platforms (LibGuide, library website)

Positive outcomes:

- Initial “lay of the land”
- System of benchmarks and actions
- Liaison outreach opportunities
- Increased reflection on how students use library materials

Unsustainable practices:

- Labor intensive – skills not transferrable
- Scale / information overload
- Technological degradation
- Unsure of which measures were important
- Concordia’s “dashboard” ended up with 167 Web pages, 472 charts, and 85 unique spreadsheets!



Phase 2: Adjustments for sustainability

Technology solutions

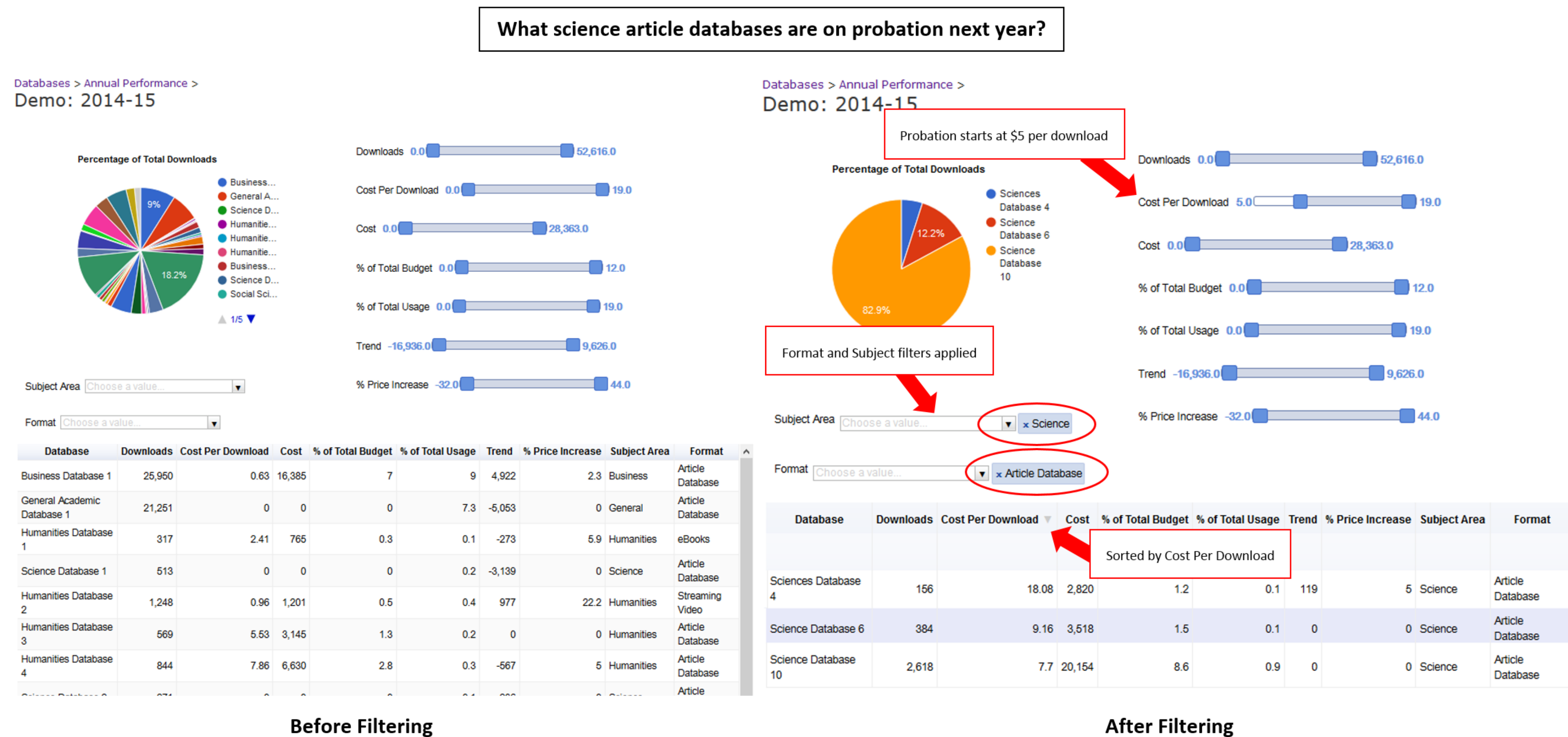
Scripting, uniformity, and interactivity

Scripting encourages uniformity, which encourages:

- Common data structure, easier to train other staff
- Consistent instantiation from year to year
- Less documentation, less building, less time spent

Scripting encourages interactivity, which encourages:

- Engagement throughout staff
- Expansive thinking, pattern recognition
- “Let me show you what I’m seeing”-type sharing



Automating routine data functions

Using SQL (Structured Query Language)

- Supported in Microsoft Access
- **Queries** find data that match certain criteria
- **Update queries** modify or add data based on your parameters

Example: an update query to assign a value for the Fiscal Year of each transaction based on data in the date field

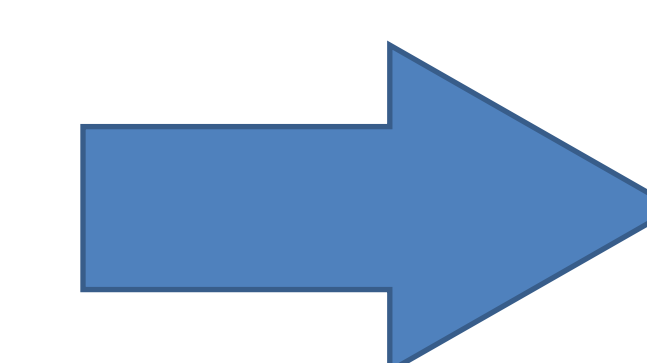
Estimated time saved: Queries save ~6 hours of processing for an annual set of reference desk transaction data

Using Macros

- Supported in Microsoft Excel (using VBA)
- Pre-programmed actions
- Clean up periodically gathered data

Example: a Macro to remove header info from COUNTER reports and store it on separate tab with **one click**

Estimated time saved: 2 minutes for each COUNTER report being processed.



Phase 3: Future goals

What comes next

Better strategic alignment

Data collection focused on:

- Measuring library or campus goals
- National statistics reporting (IPEDS, ACRL)

Create time and capacity for:

- Assessment pilot projects
- Exploration of further automation

Unlock silos

Library data silos:

- Produce data with limited relevance
- Ignore schema important to wider community (e.g., retention, program outcomes)

A common data structure:

- Allows comparison of library services across one discipline (e.g., nursing or sociology)
- Creates a team environment and culture of assessment at the library

Integrate with external data

Within the university

- Enrollment data
- Course management data
- Assessment management data

Outside the university

- NCES Library Comparison tool
- Publishing data
- ACRL Trends and ARL Data

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