Assessing Community Users in an Academic Library
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Introduction
As a public, metropolitan university with a student population of approximately 13,000, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock has accepted a leadership role in the community and is committed to improving and enhancing the livelihood, viability and progress of Little Rock, Central Arkansas and particularly the University District (i.e. the neighborhoods surrounding the university). As a participant in the University’s outreach efforts, the Ottenheimer Library has extended generous library privileges to members of community. Privileges include Internet access, the ability to borrow items (in all formats) from the circulating collection, as well as use electronic resources, reference materials, and other non-circulating materials within the library.

This presentation reports on a recent study of the Library’s community users. Quantitative measures include an examination of data from the Library’s integrated library system and print management system. Qualitative measures include data collected from a survey of community user needs and expectations. The results of this study have provided a clearer understanding of who the community users are and how to best meet their needs while not diminishing resources for the Library’s primary clientele.

Methodology

Community Users - Definition
Individuals who have no affiliation with the institution as students, faculty, alumni or members of the governing board and individuals affiliated with an institution through a consortium agreement for reciprocal borrowing (Russell, 1995).

Demographics
Approximately 500 active community users at any given time.
Two groups of users: Borrowers and Computer Users
• Only 15% overlap between the two groups
• No overlap between community users and donors

Borrowers
• 58% female; 42% male
• Median age = 35; male =34; female =36
• Make up 8% of library circulation
• 1/3 of borrowers were 1 time users

Computer Users
• 49% female; 51% male
• Median age =33; male =35; female =30

User Requests
• More computers and longer times
• Additional software
• Remote access to databases
• Interlibrary loan
• Improvements to collection

Conclusions
Offering library services to unaffiliated users has been an important contribution to local community
• Overall financial impact has been low
• Few if any financial gifts from community users
• “Costs and losses relatively small”
• “Good Will” benefits exist but are hard to quantify

Bibliography