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ANALYZING LIBRARY COLLECTION USE WITH EXCEL

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ANALYZING LIBRARY COLLECTION USE WITH EXCEL. Tony Greiner and Bob Cooper. *Chicago: American Library Association, 2007, 192 pp., ISBN: 978-0-8389-0933-1.*

The book begins with a brief overview of the practice of collection analysis, including the two main types: 1) comparing the holdings of the library to what it ought to have and 2) library patrons' use of the collection. What should and should not be counted, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of library use studies are discussed. Next, the author explains, in great detail, the basics of using Excel. The several pages devoted to these basics will be very helpful to someone unfamiliar with Excel. However, to a more experienced user, the amount of detail can get tedious. The Excel screenshots used throughout the book are very well done as they are large and clear enough to read both the data and see the toolbar buttons.

The next two chapters of Greiner's book explain how to download circulation data from an Integrated Library System text file into Excel and then clean it up. Chapter 5 starts getting into the meat of the book by introducing how to determine collection size and age by first deciding what to analyze. It is recommended that electronic books be analyzed separately from print ones due to the differences in how they are actually used. Collection age is usually measured by the average year of publication (mean). Age can also be measured by the median publication date. Details are given on how to calculate these averages in Excel. Also stressed is the importance of copying data from a working file to a summary file which divides the collection into specific sessions.

Circulation analysis is defined as the average number of uses per title. It is believed that past use predicts future use. A circulation to acquisitions ratio can be used to show how overall use can be compared to newly obtained materials in specific parts of the collection. The author stresses the importance of being consistent in definitions of "use."   Next, the book covers the calculation and application of correlation, for example, to see if collection age affects circulation.

This correlation data can be broken down into use by call number sections (subject areas) to determine the future budget.

Analysis of the collection as a whole using the data in the summary file is then explained. Relative use can be determined, which in theory says that the percentage of use of part of the collection should equal the same percentage of the number of titles in that part of the collection compared to the number in the entire collection. It is recommended that collection use analysis be done annually or biannually. An entire chapter is devoted to the use of charts and color to graphically show the findings obtained.

Covered lastly are management statistics that can be determined with Excel, such as average cost per item and average cost per use. Suggestions for future research are also listed , specifically for areas that need further study or updating.

Overall, the book gives very detailed instructions on how to perform collection analysis using Excel, making it easy for anyone to do. Issues that need to be examined are mentioned, and the benefits and shortcomings of analysis are also covered realistically. Included are several bibliographies for further information on subjects that were only briefly covered or mentioned in this publication.

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