Measuring and Responding to the Evolution of Science Researcher Needs at the Smithsonian

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Introduction

The Smithsonian Natural & Physical Science libraries have deployed a variety of strategies and other feedback mechanisms that investigate museum and research center’s research and scholarly publishing practices. Investigations included the use of library print and digital collections for research, service and training priorities, methods employed to find journal articles, organization of our website, data management, and user experience.

Spaces & Collections

**Motivation**
Finding the best use of space and budgets requires working across departments and user groups to better understand the priorities of both staff and management.

**Questions**
1. Serials Survey
   - What are the most important subject areas that staff need?
   - Staff can identify most important journals, helping as an information provider.

2. Training Rooms
   - What should an update of the training rooms include?
   - Large video screens and nontechnology training areas in various departments.

3. Collections & Services Survey
   - What is the role of library services and collections in supporting research?
   - Electronic access to important resources can provide resources for any staff.

**Main Findings**
- Staff can identify most important journals, helping as an information provider.
- User-friendly but robust technology is our learning system used by both users and management.
- The National Zoological Park launched a “Think” command for researchers to search e-resources by branch.

**Response**
- Journal collections were cross-referenced with departmental services and catalog.
- Related library print collections were organized into new purchasing categories.
- User-friendly but robust technology is our learning system used by both users and management.
- The National Zoological Park launched a “Think” command for researchers to search e-resources by branch.

Research Lifecycle Integration

**Motivation**
Decisions about allocation of staff and fiscal resources to our science libraries are best made with an understanding of the current and evolving needs of our users.

**Questions**
1. Science Researcher Survey
   - What is the value and use of library services and resources?

2. Data Management Survey
   - What are the phases of research that require staff help, and what current data management tools does staff use?

**Main Findings**
1. Science Researcher Survey
   - Research is used to collect evidence that is important and valuable.

2. Data Management Survey
   - Staff work with researchers to create online databases.

**Response**
A stakeholders session is held to bring together all the for whom we and researchers to improve data management.

Online Experience

**Motivation**
As the main point of access for our geographically dispersed user group, and recognizing the need to improve access to our online resources, we want to improve the user experience of our website.

**Questions**
1. Card Sorting
   - What are the logical groupings of our user content?

2. Google Analytics
   - How do users experience our website?

3. Usability Studies
   - What resources are needed to support our website?

**Main Findings**
1. Card Sorting
   - Most users want research tools available through the main user portal.

2. Google Analytics
   - Website is not user-friendly fixed by fixing the individual sites and improving access to information organization.

3. Usability Studies
   - Science research data and guides are needed for education audiences.

**Response**
- Updated navigation of our Research Tools website, outside of News.
- New Training...section was launched for data management, and blog to support access to technology.

Tips for Success

- Incentives help gather more participants.
- Having contact & champions in departments.
- Important to have a variety of feedback methods.
- Data enhances communication with management.
- Participants using unfamiliar tools (e.g., card sort) require additional assistance.

Key to Symbols
- Card Sorting
- Usability Studies
- Google Analytics
- Qualitative Analysis
- Quantitative Analysis
- User Survey

About Smithsonian Libraries

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Over 50,000 new books and manuscripts
Open by appointment only in 2017 online

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