# From Counting Offerings and Use to <u>Assessing Impacts</u>

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# How do you measure impact?

"Evaluative research in the field is fragmented and noncumulative. And it is unsupported by the basic research that would permit wiser experimentation with programs."

(Childers, Thomas. Evaluative Research in the Library and Information Field. *Library Trends 38*, no. 2 (1989): 264.)

Archives are in the same place 20 years later

# Evaluation in archives

"The state of evaluation research and practice within archives is characterized by the absence of a solid foundation of data upon which to base future coordinated research efforts and practical evaluation initiatives. Unlike libraries, which have a long-established tradition of data collection and analysis, and museums, which have taken a more aggressive user-focused approach to evaluation, archives have not engaged in consistent evaluation activities, nor have they attempted to share existing data across institutions, despite a general, profession-wide acknowledgement of the value of evaluation to the operation of archives, and indeed to their very survival in uncertain economic times."

(*Developing standardized metrics for assessing use and user services for primary sources: a literature review for the AX-SNet Project.* Wendy Duff, Sarah Carson, & Jean Dryden. Unpublished manuscript.)

# Archival eXcellence in Information Seeking Studies Network (AX-SNet)

- AX-Snet is an informal network that provides a mechanism for researchers to meet and discuss their shared interest.  The network aims to:
  - Promote user centred archive research;
  - Develop a coordinated research agenda;
  - Develop generic evaluation tools, metrics and methods; and

- Facilitate comparability in evaluation studies

# Archival Metrics project

- Funded by the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the study was initiated in December of 2003.

- Collaborators from the University of Toronto, the University of North Carolina, and the University of Michigan lead the AX-SNet research team.

# AX-SNet:

- **Mission:**

  **(1)** To improve access to primary sources;

  **(2)** To explore the ways users seek information in archives; and

  **(3)** To develop new ways to teach people about how to do effective archival research.

# Developing a Culture of Assessment

- Study of archivists' interest in user-based evaluation
  - Archivists face many barriers to carrying out these studies.

# Registry of Archival Repositories (ROAR)

- "ROAM"
  - Repository of Archival Metrics
    - Standardizing how we count

# The Evolution of a Survey…

- An archives evaluation questionnaire pre-tested sequentially at:
  - Toronto (Victoria College)
  - Michigan (Bentley Historical Society)
  - North Carolina (UNC)

# Yale Impact Study

- Evaluation of the archives orientation provided by Yale University Archives staff:
  - 69 students completed a questionnaire before the orientation session at the beginning of the semester; instructors also completed a questionnaire.
  - 46 students completed a questionnaire at the end of the semester; instructors also completed a questionnaire.

# Champlain Society Survey

- A survey of over 500 members of the Champlain Society is currently being conducted.

- The study seeks to understand how and why members of the Champlain Society developed their interest in history and cultural heritage.

# What's next?

- Deployment of the archives evaluation questionnaire:
  - in Canada and the US
  - in Great Britain
- Workshop at ACA
- What will the Champlain Society study show?
- What is the best way to assess the value of archives?