The Development, Testing, and Evaluation of the Archival Metrics Toolkits

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Abstract

This paper reports on the Archival Metrics Project, which developed, tested, and evaluated a set of toolkits designed to overcome some of the challenges of conducting user-based evaluation in college and university archival repositories. The Archival Metrics Project is ongoing. The initial toolkits result from a five-year, two-phase project funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The project involved academics from three North American universities and twenty partners from academic archival institutions. At the completion of the study, the researchers interviewed ten archivists at partner institutions who took part in the testing of the toolkits and one year later gathered data using a questionnaire from fifty-nine individuals who downloaded the toolkits. The paper describes previous research on user-based evaluation in archives and similar projects conducted in the library field, the process of developing and testing five questionnaires and various methods to administer the questionnaires, as well as the evaluation of the toolkits. It concludes with a discussion of the issues raised about adoption and diffusion of these instruments.

I n 2004, Jacques Grimard noted "that despite a long tradition and expertise in appraising and in evaluating information and in collecting data on their activities, archivists have not seriously addressed evaluation of their programs, either from a theoretical or from a methodological perspective."[1] Four years later, Wendy Duff, Jean Dryden, Carrie Limkilde, Joan Cherry, and Ellie Bogomazonva conducted a focus group study on this topic and found that archivists expressed interest in gathering feedback from their users and

[1] Jacques Grimard, "Program Evaluation and Archives: 'Appraising' Archival Work and Achievement," *Archivaria* 57 (2004): 69–87.

evaluating their services and products, but few believed they had the time or the expertise to implement an evaluation program. They suggested that archives often fail to carry out evaluation studies due to "a lack of money to hire outside experts, lack of time to conduct user-based evaluation research in-house, and a lack of expertise."[2] Furthermore, some participants expressed concern that dissatisfied or unhappy users are more likely to respond to a survey than users who are satisfied with the services they received. However, participants also noted that senior management often needs evidence that the archives' services and websites support the organization's objectives and goals. Moreover, many funding agencies require greater accountability and formal reviews for all funded projects. For example, the Canadian Council of Archives requires a performance measurement plan for the National Archival Development Program.[3] Grimard suggests archivists can reduce their vulnerability and demonstrate their contribution to society by participating in generic program evaluation initiatives, reviewing their own programs and budgets, as well as exploring ideas to improve programs and services.[4] In an era of greater accountability and benchmarking, evaluation has become increasingly important to many archives.

Peter Hernon and Robert E. Dugan note that evaluation in an organizational setting provides evidence to distinguish between effective/efficient and ineffective/inefficient programs, services, and policies, and to address questions such as

- What improvements in a program, service or policy might result in continuous quality improvements and better accountability?

- How well does a program, service or policy reach its target population and meet the group's information needs and expectations?[5]

Carol W. Weiss suggests that most program directors undertake program evaluation to assist with decision-making. She notes that managers might want to evaluate a program for midcourse corrections, to test a new program idea, to choose the best of several alternatives, or to decide to continue, expand, or cut a program.[6]

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[2] Wendy M. Duff, Jean Dryden, Carrie Limkilde, Joan Cherry, and Ellie Bogomazonva, "Archivists' Views of User-based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers and Requirements," *American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 158.

[3] For information on the National Archival Development Program see http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archives/042-200-e.html, accessed 4 August 2010.

[4] Grimard, "Program Evaluation and Archives."

[5] Peter Hernon and Robert E. Dugan, "Assessment and Evaluation: What Do the Terms Really Mean?," *C&RL News* (March 2009): 148.

[6] Carol W. Weiss, *Evaluation*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 25–26.

Most archives want to ensure accountability, to improve their services, and to gather evidence that their programs and services meet their users' needs, but as Grimard points out, few seem to undertake formal evaluation studies.[7] This project investigated the suggestion of Duff et al. that archives might conduct more user evaluation studies if they had access to appropriate survey instruments and simple administrative procedures that ensured adequate response rates.[8] Can these tools help archivists collect data on measurable indicators of goal achievement? The study developed and tested a set of toolkits that included questionnaires and procedures for gathering feedback from the users of academic archives. The researchers sought to provide archives with robust, rigorous, inexpensive, and user-friendly tools and effective procedures to administer them. This paper describes the methodology used to develop, test, and implement the research instruments in a number of archives and reports on data gathered from 59 individuals who downloaded the toolkits.

Literature Review

Many archivists have emphasized the need to study and better understand the use and users of archives over the last 30 years.[9] Existing literature in the field of archival user studies focuses primarily on understanding the information behavior of specific user groups. Researchers have directed some attention to studying major user groups such as historians[10] and genealogists.[11] More recently, Margaret O'Neill Adams traced the existence of several distinct user groups, each of which used data from the National Archives and Records

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[7] Grimard, "Program Evaluation and Archives."

[8] Duff et al., "Archivists' Views of User-based Evaluation.

[9] William J. Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," *American Archivist* (Spring 1984): 124–33; William J. Maher, "Use of Users Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11 (1986): 15–26; Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter/Spring 1988): 74–95; Timothy L. Ericson, " 'Preoccupied with Our Own Gardens': Outreach and Archives," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990/91): 114–22; Richard J. Cox, "Researching Archival Reference as an Information Function: Observations on Need and Opportunities," *RQ* 31, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 387–97.

[10] Michael Stevens, "The Historian and the Finding Aid," *Georgia Archives* 5 (1977): 68–72; Diane L. Beattie, "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989/90): 33–50; Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Accidentally Found on Purpose: Information Seeking Behavior of Historians in Archives," *Library Quarterly* 72 (October 2002): 472–500; Helen R. Tibbo, "Primarily History in America: How U.S. Historians Search for Primary Materials at the Dawn of the Digital Age," *American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 9–50; Ian G. Anderson, "Are You Being Served? Historians and the Search for Primary Sources," *Archivaria* 58 (Fall 2004): 81–130.

[11] Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "Where Is the List with All the Names? Information-Seeking Behavior of Genealogists," *American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 79–95; Elizabeth Yakel, "Seeking Information, Seeking Connections, Seeking Meaning: Genealogists and Family Historians," *Information Research* 10, no. 1 (October 2003); Elizabeth Yakel, "Genealogists as a 'Community of Records'," *American Archivist* 70, no. 1 (2007): 93–117.

Administration (NARA) differently.[12] Duff and Cherry studied the impact of archival orientation sessions at Yale University Library Manuscripts and Archives,[13] and Xiaomu Zhou studied the needs of students doing archival research.[14]

A small number of North American archives have also conducted usability studies of their services and systems. For example, Burt Altman and John Nemmers published the findings of their usability study that evaluates the Pepper OnLine Archival Retrieval and Information System (Polaris) project at the Claude Pepper Library at Florida State University.[15] Merrilee Proffitt discusses the usability study of RLG's RedLightGreen;[16] Maureen A. Burns describes a user study of the University of California's digital image service;[17] and other archivists have undertaken studies of the usability of EAD finding aids.[18] Though these studies provide insights into the usability of some archival systems in the United States, they are limited to specific institutions.

In contrast to one-time, institutional evaluations in North America, archivists in the United Kingdom have developed and administer periodic systematic national surveys to gain a better understanding of users' opinions of the services they receive. In 1996, British archivists initiated the Public Service Quality Group for Archives and Local Studies (PSQG), a voluntary organization for archivists interested in advancing best practices and improving the quality of service in archives. The group first carried out the National Survey of Visitors to U.K. Archives in 1998 and has conducted the survey every 18 months since 2001.[19] This longitudinal study provides a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of archives' users' demographic characteristics and satisfaction within the United Kingdom. For example, the PSQG's comparison of the 2007 and 2006 surveys reveals that respondents were more satisfied with the helpfulness and

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[12] Margaret O'Neill Adams, "Analyzing Archives and Finding Facts: Use and Users of Digital Data Records," *Archival Science* 7, no. 1 (2007): 21–36.

[13] Wendy M. Duff and Joan M. Cherry, "Archival Orientation for Undergraduate Students: An Exploratory Study of Impact," *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 499–529.

[14] Xiaomu Zhou, "Student Archival Research Activity: An Exploratory Study," *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 476–98.

[15] Burt Altman and John Nemmers, "The Usability of On-line Archival Resources: The Polaris Project Finding Aid," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001): 121–31.

[16] Merrilee Proffitt, "How and Why of User Studies: RLG's RedLightGreen as a Case Study," *Journal of Archival Organization* 4, nos. 1–2 (2006): 87–110.

[17] Maureen A. Burns, "From Horse-Drawn to Hot Rod: The University of California's Digital Image Experience," *Journal of Archival Organization* 4, nos. 1–2 (2006): 111–39.

[18] For example, Elizabeth Yakel, "Encoded Archival Description: Are Finding Aids Boundary Spanners or Barriers for Users?," *Journal of Archival Organization* 2, nos. 1–2 (2004): 63–77; Christopher J. Prom, "User Interactions with Electronic Finding Aids in a Controlled Setting," *American Archivist* 67 (Fall/Winter 2004): 234–68.

[19] See PSQG, "Survey of Visitors to U.K. Archives 2007," available at http://www.nca.org.uk/materials/psqg_national_report_2007.pdf, accessed 2 September 2009.

friendliness of the staff, with 79% of visitors regarding it as very good in 2007, as opposed to 62% in 2006; and that satisfaction with microfilm and fiche viewing facilities also rose, with 45% stating that it was very good in 2007, as opposed to 38% in 2006. It remains to be seen if a group similar to the PSQG would meet the needs of North American archives.

British archives have not always studied their users. Anna Sexton, Chris Turner, Geoffrey Yeo, and Susan Hockey posit that "inadequate resources have certainly meant that all too often" archivists must choose between preserving records or serving users. "Archivists have often found that in Jenkinson's words, they have 'no leisure' to concentrate on both in equal measure."[20] Sexton et al. also point out that British archives have taken a more user-centered approach since the lord chancellor published a command paper that led to "strategies across the archive domain for giving priority to effective user access alongside the preservation and conservation of the record."[21]

Though few North American archives systematically study their users, many archivists and leaders in the field highlight the importance of designing systems based on a solid understanding of users' information practices. They point out that

> The archival community does not have a good understanding of its current or potential user community, their interests. . .or their needs. . . .Without such data, archivists will not be able to design access systems that address user needs effectively.[22]

> It is clearly time for the archival world to embrace user-oriented design. This is predicated on knowing a good deal about users; and this can only come from conducting extensive, rigorous user studies rather than relying upon anecdotal evidence and gut feelings about clientele.[23]

> Good reference service, like good business means discovering patrons' needs, developing the means to meet these needs and following up to measure the impact of services.[24]

[20] Anna Sexton, Chris Turner, Geoffrey Yeo, and Susan Hockey, "Understanding Users: A Prerequisite for Developing New Technologies," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 25, no. 1 (2004): 36.

[21] Sexton et al., "Understanding Users," 36.

[22] Margaret Hedstrom, "How Do Archivists Make Electronic Archives Usable and Accessible?," *Archives and Manuscripts* 26 (1998): 12.

[23] Helen R. Tibbo, "Primarily History: Historians and the Search for Primary Source Materials," *Proceedings of the Second ACM/IEEE-CS Joint Conference on Digital Libraries*, Portland, Oregon, 14–18 July 2002 (New York: ACM, 2002), 1.

[24] Paul Conway, "Research in Presidential Libraries: A User Survey," *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986): 35–55.

> The relative paucity of user studies . . . poses a problem in an electronic environment, because most EAD projects have been conducted with little or no formal feedback from users.[25]

Margaret Hedstrom, Helen Tibbo, Paul Conway, and Christopher Prom all point to the need to design archival systems and services based on an understanding gained from studying users; unfortunately, this knowledge is lacking at the current time. Even though archivists know more about archives' users and their information practices than they did a decade ago, archivists still know very little about how users interact with archival finding aids, websites, and a host of other services. If archivists spend scarce resources and time creating archival systems and services without considering users' needs, they may fail to meet their ethical and professional responsibilities.

Librarians, on the other hand, have been gathering data on the use of their services for a century. The Gerould Statistics include data on library collections, expenditures, staffing, and service activities from 1907, and since 1960 the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has gathered similar data.[26] In the late 1990s, the Association of Research Libraries New Measures and Assessment Initiatives developed LibQUAL+, a suite of services designed to solicit and evaluate users' perception of service quality in library institutions. The LibQUAL+ project aims to help libraries better understand user perceptions of service quality and identify best practices in library services. ARL reports that more than a thousand institutions—including colleges and universities, community colleges, health sciences libraries, law libraries, and public libraries—have participated in LibQUAL+ since 2000, producing an extensive dataset.[27]

The project also provides libraries with a tool to compare assessment information from peer institutions. The central data collection tool is a rigorously tested Web-based questionnaire that builds on the SERVQUAL instrument of A. Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry. SERVQUAL examines gaps between service expectations and perceived performance as a means of measuring service quality in the private sector.[28] According to Bruce Thompson, Colleen

[25] Christopher Prom, "The EAD Cookbook: A Survey and Usability Study," *American Archivist* 65 (2002): 266.

[26] Association of Research Libraries, "ARL Statistics," available at http://www.arl.org/stats/annualsurveys/arlstats/, accessed 23 February 2010. The collection of statistics began independently in 1907; ARL took over the administration of the annual survey in 1961.

[27] Association of Research Libraries, "What Is LibQUAL+®?," available at http://www.libqual.org/home, accessed 21 January 2010.

[28] A. Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry, "SERVQUAL: A Multiple-Item Scale for Measuring Customer Perceptions of Service Quality," *Journal of Retailing* 64 (Spring 1988): 12–40; A. Parasuraman, Leonard Berry, and Valerie Zeithaml, "Refinement and Reassessment of the SERVQUAL Scale," *Journal of Retailing* 67 (Winter 1991): 420–50; A. Parasuraman, Valerie Zeithaml, and Leonard Berry, "Alternative Scales for Measuring Service Quality: A Comparative Assessment Based on Psychometric and Diagnostic Criteria," *Journal of Retailing* 70 (1994): 201–30.

Cook, and Fred Heath, gap measurement models are distinguished by their use of multiple ratings for the same item.[29] For example, the Web-based questionnaire captures data on 41 service criteria.[30] Participants rate each of these 41 service criteria according to minimum level of service, perceived level of service, and desired level of service.

Like PSQG and LibQUAL+ projects, the Archival Metrics project developed and tested survey instruments for gathering data from users across numerous archives. We began by interviewing the educational and scholarly users of university and college archives as well as archivists to identify the aspects of archival services and systems that they thought important.[31]

Interviews with Users of Archives and Archivists

We asked 12 professors and 16 students about the services and support they expected archives to provide, their good and bad archival research experiences, and their preferred ways of providing feedback. We also asked the professors about the types of support students who work with archival sources in their disciplines need. We asked similar questions of 14 archivists. We asked the archivists to imagine how their different services should be evaluated, to identify markers of good service, and to describe their goals for different services (e.g., archival orientation). We also asked the archivists whether they carried out any user-based evaluation studies and whether they would conduct such studies if the process was less onerous. We reviewed transcripts of the interviews and noted specific archival services and facilities the interviewees highlighted and identified commonalities and concerns among the participants.

We used this data to develop a conceptual framework that identified important aspects of archival services for users. The perspectives of these 3 groups—professors, students, and archivists—highlighted key, but occasionally differing, characteristics of archival access, which informed our conceptual framework and the development of the survey instruments. For example, we asked all interviewees about finding aids and their use. Students and professors referred to "finding aid" using a variety of different terms, including *inventory*,[32] *help sheet*,[33]

[29] Bruce Thompson, Colleen Cook, and Fred Heath, "The LibQUAL+ Gap Measurement Model: The Bad, the Ugly, and the Good of Gap Measurement," *Performance Measurement and Metrics* 1, no. 3 (2000): 165–78.

[30] See http://www.libqual.org/, accessed 4 August 2010.

[31] After lengthy negotiation with our funder, we decided to focus this research on academic and scholarly users of college and university archives. We recognize that administrative users are a major stakeholder in university archives, but we envision this project as the first of a longer-term research agenda that would, over time, address administrative users.

[32] MPM02, 9:12, lines 31–33.

[33] MPD04, 32:96, lines 479–83.

card catalog, online catalog, guide,[34] *catalog system, finding guide,*[35] *source guide,*[36] *book,*[37] and *finding mechanism.*[38] Some participants also discussed archival systems that integrated paper finding aids, card catalogs, and online access tools to various degrees from little integration to full interoperability.[39]

Professors discussed the role and important functions of finding aids and identified them as tools that help assess the value of an archives to their research,[40] navigate an archives,[41] or focus a research topic.[42] Some of the professors identified problems they had encountered using finding aids, noting that the content of some finding aids does not match the content in the collection and that many finding aids are incomplete.[43]

The students also discussed the role and important functions of finding aids, which they identified as tools that help navigate and explore archives,[44] identify a place to begin research,[45] and assess the research strengths of the available resources.[46] Not only did the students understand the role of the finding aid as an access tool, but they also appreciated its function as a research management aid. As a management tool, they wanted finding aids that aid in planning a project,[47] managing their time,[48] and preparing for a visit to an archives.[49]

Students also indicated some problems with the finding aids they had used including incomplete descriptions,[50] a disconnect between the content of the finding aid and the content of the collection,[51] mislabeling of material,[52] and different descriptions for the same collection in different tools (e.g., the online

[34] MPT02, 33:21, line 90; MSM06, 37:92, line 473.

[35] MPD03, 31:48, lines 168–77.

[36] MSM06, 37:92, line 473.

[37] MSM09, 40:24, lines 148–61.

[38] MSM 45:53, line 211.

[39] MSM14, MPD04, MPT02, MSM09.

[40] MPT02, 33:63, lines 314–25.

[41] MPT02, 33:21, lines 90–101; MPD02, 30:49, line 141.

[42] MPD02, 30:49, lines 141–44; MPD02, 30:131, lines 536–56; MPT02, 33:67, lines 343–50.

[43] MPY01, 5:68, lines 569–81; MPY01, 5:195, lines 553–59; MPD02, 30:8, lines 33–40, MPD04, 32:12, line 58; MPD03, 31:48, lines 168–77.

[44] MSM01, 35:28, 96, lines 384–90.

[45] MSM05, 15:117, line 628; MSM12, 43:85, line 407.

[46] MSM13, 44:29, lines 140–49.

[47] MSM12, line 43.

[48] MSM12, 43:81, lines 384–90.

[49] MSM05, 15:73, lines 391–95, 44:33, lines 165–69.

[50] MSM05, 15:13, lines 63–67; MSM09, 40:95, lines 552–59.

[51] MSM14, 45:208, lines 1056–60.

[52] MSM05, 15:52, lines 261–65.

and paper finding aid).[53] Though the students highlighted many problems, unlike the professors, they made no suggestions for improving these access tools.

The archivists acknowledged the need to improve the usability of finding aids. Three archivists discussed the need to create user-friendly finding aids,[54] while another archivist suggested that enriching the subject guides[55]or finding aids with comments from users[56] would improve access to archival material. Four archivists noted the importance of providing users with instruction on the use of finding aids.[57] Only 1 archivist was able to provide an example of a student using a finding aid effectively.[58]

The Conceptual Framework

We extracted concepts from the literature review and the findings from the interviews to derive a conceptual framework for this study and then used the framework to operationalize and to define the concepts and to guide the development of the questionnaires. Based on our literature review and the interviews, we determined that university and college archives need research instruments to gather feedback on the interactions between users and staff, users and the physical repository, and users and access tools. Our conceptual framework appears in Figure 1.

Archives' users bring a context to their research, and their use of the archives always takes place within that context. Archivists appreciate the importance of context in archives, but they usually focus on the contexts of records, rather than on the contexts of users. The central part of our high-level framework highlights the interaction framed within the user's context. Users' contexts filter and affect their interactions with an archives and may influence the type of feedback they provide. Each user has multiple layers of context, but in our conceptual framework, we highlighted important contexts identified in the interviews and the literature review, including researchers' expertise in using archives, their academic status, and the purpose of their visit to the archives. Early pilot testing also indicated that knowing the contexts of users provides information important for the analysis of the survey results. Therefore, we

[53] MSM05, 15:52, lines 261–65.

[54] MAM07, 20:78, lines 574–78; MAY01, 18:153, line 720; MAT04, 27:71, lines 404–14.

[55] MAT02, 17:81, lines 539–67.

[56] MAT02, 17:92, lines 615–24.

[57] MAM06, 25:27, lines 224–31 and 25:42, lines 332–57; MAY01, 18:5, lines 16–29; MAM01, 21:43, lines 351–59; MAT03, 19:21, line 132; MAM07, 20:61, lines 462–68; MAM07, 20:73, lines 550–68; MAM06, 25:28, line 224.
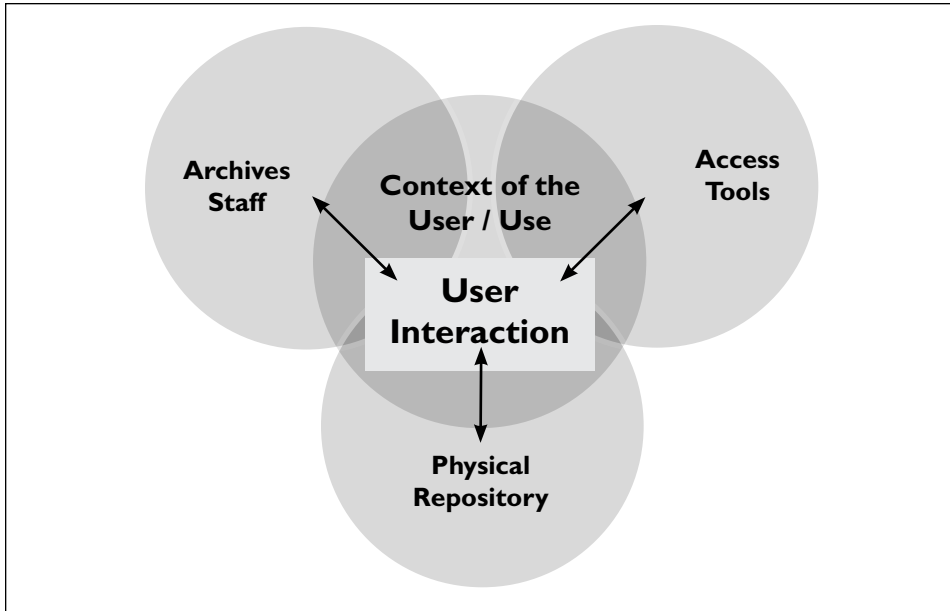
[58] MAT04, 27:71, lines 404–14.

F I G U R E   1 . Archival metrics conceptual framework.

developed a standard set of demographic questions to help contextualize respondents, including age and status, as well as information about prior use of archives.

We identified 3 primary types of interactions: 1) those with the archives staff; 2) those with the physical repository; and 3) those with the access tools of the archives or special collections (e.g., a website or the online finding aids). Within each of these high-level concepts we identified a number of lower-level concepts from the literature and the interviews that we operationalized in the questionnaires.

The following example, which relates to the interaction between a user and the archives staff, demonstrates how a concept identified from the interviews resulted in a definition and a question on a questionnaire. The interviews revealed that both users and archivists believe that the availability of the reference archivist affects the user experience. The interviewees, however, identified different aspects of the availability of staff. For example, an archivist talked about availability of staff members in terms of their approachability and the degree to which they are aware that users have questions:

> This is a very big place and people are busy. If somebody doesn't stop you to ask you a question and you don't even see that they're there because they don't…we're actually thinking about finding some mechanism like a bell rings when somebody walks in the door because you get so focused on your

computer screen that you don't even know somebody's there. We understand why they're a little intimidated.[59]

A student also discussed the importance of access to helpful staff. "I've said this a million times, but the access to someone who is open to helping. So not just someone who is supposed to be doing it, but who actually wants to."[60] This student wanted an archivist who was approachable as well as physically available.

One professor discussed a different aspect of availability: "And they'll even do it after hours, almost every one of them. In fact, they'd rather do it after hours because they don't have a crush of business in there."[61] The professor's comments highlight the importance of availability in terms of the hours of service. The E-Metrics Project, an initiative to develop measures for assessing electronic information resources, also suggests that accessibility is related to the hours a service is available:

> Accessibility of Service is a measure of how easily potential users are able to avail themselves of the service and includes (but is certainly not limited to) such factors as: availability (both time and day of the week); site design (simplicity of interface); ADA compliance; ease of use; placement in Website hierarchy if using Web submission form or email link from the Website; use of metatags for digital reference Websites (indexed in major search tools, etc.); or multilingual capabilities in both interface and staff, if warranted based on target population.[62]

In summary, the interviews point to 2 different meanings for the term *availability*: a person's approachability and openness to interruptions or questions, or his or her availability in terms of hours of service. We decided to ask different types of questions to capture these 2 concepts of availability. The Researcher Questionnaire includes questions about both the approachability and the availability of the staff, as well as a Likert scale question asking people how satisfied they are with the hours of service. We used the same process of identifying core concepts from the literature and our interviews, operationalizing the concepts, and developing questions for each of the 5 questionnaires. The next section discusses the process of refining the questions and testing the questionnaires.

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[59] MAM02, lines 403–408.

[60] MSM02, lines 559–61.

[61] MPM04, lines 320–22.

[62] See http://emis.ii.fsu.edu/catalog_entrydetails.cfm?emetric_key=107, accessed 4 August 2010.

Developing the Questionnaires

Developing and testing the questionnaires was an iterative process. In the end, we developed 5 questionnaires. Three of them are designed to gather information about services from specific types of users:

- on-site visitors in the Researcher Questionnaire;[63]
- students who use the archives as part of a course in the Student Researcher Questionnaire; and
- instructors who use the archives in their teaching in the Teaching Support Questionnaire.

We developed separate questionnaires for students and instructors because of the importance of teaching in an academic setting. The other 2 questionnaires gather information about tools: the Website and the Online Finding Aids questionnaires.[64] Each questionnaire contains a variety of questions grouped into areas. Table 1 lists the sections contained in each questionnaire and the type of questions presented in each section.

We drafted the first versions of the Researcher, the Teaching Support, and the Student Researcher questionnaires in late 2005 and early 2006, and the Website and the Online Finding Aids questionnaires in fall 2006. We originally planned to develop a database of questions that archivists could use to develop questionnaires for their specific archives. We decided, however, against developing a list of individual questions; instead we created a set of questionnaires to gather feedback on specific services or from specific types of users. We created a set of questionnaires because individual questions do not stand on their own or in isolation; the questions within a section of a questionnaire (described below) often depend on other questions in that section. For example, the fourth section of the Researcher Questionnaire, "Feedback on Visit," includes 3 questions:

1. How successful were you in meeting the goals of your visit today?
2. Please indicate which statements describe your visit today. Please check all that apply. [The questionnaire presented 6 statements that describe possible outcomes, including "Not a good use of my time," "I learned something new about my topic/area of interest," etc.]
3. If you were unsuccessful in meeting your goals today, what would have helped you to succeed?

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[63] The on-site visitors' questionnaire is administered to anyone in the archives whether they are affiliated with the university or not, and to administrators as well as academic users.

[64] See Appendix A for the Researcher Questionnaire and http://archivalmetrics.org for all other questionnaires, accessed 4 August 2010.

Table 1. The Archival Metrics Questionnaires

Questionnaires	Sections	Type of questions (Number of questions)
Researcher		
	Section 1. Use of the [Archives] [i]	Motivation for using the archives (2)
	Section 2. Staff	Interaction with the staff (2)
	Section 3. Services and Facilities	Repository's Web catalog, finding aids, and the facilities and services (11)
	Section 4. Feedback on Your Visit	Satisfaction (3)
	Section 5. Background Information	Demographic (6)
	Section 6. General Feedback	Use of the archives overall (4)
Teaching Support		
	Section 1. Evaluation of the [Archives] Teaching	Support for teaching (6)
	Section 2. Background Information	Demographic (4)
Student Researcher		
	Section 1. Orientation	Orientation (5)
	Section 2. Use of [Archives]	Use of archives, confidence level, and demographic (10)
Website		
	Section 1. Your Use of the [Repository]	Use of Website (5)
	Section 2. Evaluation of [Repository] Website	Feedback on the Website (8)
	Section 3. Background Information	Demographics (7)
Online Finding Aids		
	Section 1. Your Research	Motivation for using the Archives site (2)
	Section 2. Online Finding Aids	Use of the online finding aid (7)
	Section 3. Background Information	Demographic (7)

[i] The name of the repository being evaluated replaces the word [Archives] or [Repository] in the questionnaire.

These questions work as a unit and depend upon each other. Therefore, we decided to formalize the sections by developing complete questionnaires rather than designing a question bank from which a potential surveyor could draw questions independently. Furthermore, questionnaires have structure as well as content, and the order of the questions and consistent formatting of a question-naire improve its flow as well as its success in gathering reliable data. For example, the question "If you were unsuccessful in meeting your goals today, what would have helped you to succeed?" should be presented after the questions "How successful were you in meeting the goals of your visit today?" and "Please indicate which statements describe your visit today." Finally, archivists who advised us during the early phases of the project expressed a wish to compare

their results with results from other archives, which requires the use of questionnaires that pose the same questions, preferably in the same order.

Testing the Questionnaires

To pretest the first 3 questionnaires, we visited local archives and gathered feedback on the wording and design of each questionnaire from archives' users. Based on the feedback, we revised each questionnaire and tested it again until the test participants indicated no problems with questions, terminology, or layout. By testing the questionnaire in both Canada and the United States, we developed wording that users in both countries understood. Whether users in other countries would also understand the terminology is unknown. We found that using some archival terminology—*finding aids,* for example—caused confusion, while users understood other terms, such as *reference staff.* The confusion over the term *finding aids* was not unexpected given our interview results and the various terms the interviewees used to refer to finding aids. In some cases, we changed the terms causing confusion; in others, we provided definitions and/or examples. For instance, we provided a definition of *finding aids* in the Researcher Questionnaire and used the definition with an example of the archives' finding aid in the Online Finding Aids Questionnaire. Participants who tested the questionnaire that included a definition and example of a finding aid had no problems with the finding aid questions. Other studies have also found that visual cues are especially important for Web-based questionnaires.[65]

Finally, in February 2007, we asked our partners to review the questionnaire for use in their archives. Some archivists modified a few questions before disseminating it. For example, question 8 on the Researcher Questionnaire states, "Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following facilities and services at this archive. Rate each on a scale from 1–5 by checking the appropriate box." The question lists 15 services and facilities including hours of service, furniture, Internet access, exhibits, and so on. Institutions that did not have exhibits or Internet access deleted these services from their questionnaire.

We used the questions and some of the sections in the Researcher Questionnaire to develop the other questionnaires. However, during the many iterations of testing, we modified a few questions on some of the questionnaires, which resulted in different wording across the questionnaires. Consistency across the questionnaires facilitates comparison among the data. Therefore, in the summer of 2007, we reviewed and edited all the questions in all questionnaires for consistency. With a final version of each questionnaire, we turned our attention to developing administrative procedures that would garner adequate

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[65] Roger Tourangeau, Mick P. Couper, and Frederick Conrad, "Spacing, Position, and Order: Interpretive Heuristics for Visual Features of Survey Questions," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2004): 368–93.

response rates and began testing these procedures at various archives in fall 2007.

Developing the Administrative Procedures

We used both paper-based and Web-based surveys. As shown in Table 2, we used paper-based questionnaires for the Researcher and Student Researcher questionnaires and Web-based questionnaires[66] for the others. Reference archivists invited on-site users to complete the Researcher Questionnaire, and they also asked instructors to invite students to complete the Student Researcher Questionnaire in their final class. The paper-based questionnaires distributed with a personal request to participate received fairly high response rates. For example, the average response rate for the paper-based Student Researcher Questionnaire was 78% and 96%, when distributed to 11 classes at 2 sites. The Researcher Questionnaire also obtained a high response rate (88%) at one archives and then progressively lower rates in other tests (68%, 47%, and 36%). At other archives, staff lost track of the number of individuals to whom they offered the questionnaires or did not offer the questionnaire to all users; therefore we could not calculate an accurate response rate for these institutions.

Table 2. Test of Administrative Procedures

Questionnaires	# of sites	Format	Recruitment/Distribution	Response rate
Researcher	4	Paper-based	Reference archivist invited on-site users	36%–88%
Teaching Support	2	Web-based	Email invitation from archivist	55% and 84%
Student Researcher	2	Paper-based	Instructors invited students to participate in class	78% and 96%
Website	1	Web-based	Static link	Less than 1%
Website	2	Web-based	Archivists emailed previous in-person users	30% and 52%
Website	1	Web-based	Archivists emailed current remote reference requestors	56%
Online Finding Aids	1	Web-based	Archivists emailed previous visitors	47%
Online Finding Aids	2	Web-based	Archivists emailed previous remote reference requestors	38%–43%
Online Finding Aids	2	Web-based	Archivists emailed current remote reference requestors	47% and 70%

[66] We used Survey Monkey, available at http://www.surveymonkey.com, to create the Web-based survey. However, we did not use Survey Monkey's response rates statistics. For various reasons, a few people accessed the questionnaire but did not answer any questions. We did not count these as responses, and, therefore, our response rates are lower than those reported by Survey Monkey.

We distributed the questionnaires on paper and on the Web and tested 6 different methods for recruiting potential respondents:

1. In-person invitation from the reference archivist;
2. Email from the archivist to previous on-site users;
3. Email from the archivist to previous email reference requestors;
4. Email from the archivist to current (recently answered) email reference requestors;
5. In-class distribution by the instructor; and
6. A static link on the website.

For the Website and Online Finding Aids surveys, we often tested 2 recruitment strategies concurrently at the same site to compare response rates.

We struggled, however, with logistical issues when testing the administrative procedures for the Website and Online Finding Aids surveys. We wished to invite all users of the archives' Website, but these users visit anonymously; and therefore, we needed to use a static link on the Website. Research shows, however, that response rates to Web-based invitations and static links on the front page of a repository's website are low.[67] Indeed, we received only 9 responses when we tried this method at one archives. Therefore, we decided to augment the static links with invitations[68] to the 50 most recent in-person reading room users and email reference requestors, that is, individuals whose email addresses the archives had previously collected. In each case, we sent 2 follow-up reminders to invitees who did not respond. When testing the Online Finding Aids survey, we assembled the sample 2 different ways. For 2 institutions (A and D), we sent an email invitation to people who had previously sent email reference requests to the archives. We wished to invite at least 50 reference requestors from each archives, which meant, in some cases, we sent invitations to people who had sent email requests many months before. In one case we sent invitations to people who had requested information from the archives a year prior to our study. We obtained response rates of 38% and 43% using this method. We decided to also send, on a weekly basis, requests to current users (people who had requested information in the previous week). We used this continuous method of recruitment at 3 other institutions (B, C, for the Online Finding Aids survey and E for the Website survey). This generated a better response rate (47%, 56%, and 70%) than the invitation to users who had not used the archives in months.

At Archives E, we used all 3 methods to administer the Website Questionnaire. The first method was a static link on the repository's website. During the time we made the questionnaire available (24 September–6 November 2007),

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[67] Robert M. Groves, Floyd J. Fowler Jr., Mick P. Couper, James M. Lepkowski, Eleanor Singer, and Roger Tourangeau, *Survey Methodology* (Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley-Interscience), 2004.

[68] The research team sent email invitations to potential respondents, but the email contained the signature of the repository's reference archivist, from whom it appeared to come. The email also indicated that respondents should address all questions to the reference archivist.

the website received 2,509 visits, but only 9 respondents completed the questionnaire for a response rate of less than 1%. The second method recruited users who had previously used the archives in person. On 28 September 2007, we sent email invitations to participate in the survey to 49 users who had recently visited the reading room. We sent 2 reminders to these potential respondents, the first on 2 October 2007 and the second on 8 October 2007. In all, we received 15 completed questionnaires, for a response rate of 30.6%. The third method recruited individuals who had recently made an email reference request. We invited these users to complete a questionnaire within a week of receiving their reference request. This sampling method was more time consuming than sending invitations to previous on-site users in a batch. For this method, archivists compiled a weekly list of email reference requestors, and the research team sent email invitations and reminders. The research team sent invitations to different sets of email reference requestors at different intervals over the course of many weeks. For example, at Archives E, we sent an email invitation to the first online reference requestors on 6 October 2007 and invited the 50th reference requestor on 10 December 2007. We also sent each requestor 2 reminders; we emailed the last reminders on 2 January 2008. Of the 50 invitees, 28 responded, for a response rate of 56%. As noted, sending current remote reference requestors an invitation to participate within a week of their request for reference assistance was time consuming, but only this method of recruiting remote users obtained an adequate response rate, and therefore, we preferred it. Not only did this method yield a higher response rate, but also, we assumed that people who had contacted the archives with a request within the past 2 weeks were more likely to have recently used the website or online finding aids. Prior research has found that recall decreases with the passage of time.[69] We assumed that recent remote reference requestors would provide more accurate data about the use of the website or online finding aids than would those whose requests were older. To ensure the respondents had recently used the resources they provided feedback on, the first question on the Website Questionnaire, "How long ago was your last visit to our Website?," acted as a filter. We asked a similar question about the use of the online finding aids on the Online Finding Aids Questionnaire. The questionnaire routed respondents who had not used the website or online finding aids within the past month to the demographic section of the questionnaire. This greatly reduced the number of respondents who provided feedback on the website and online finding aids, but we believe it decreased problems with recall. After the testing ended, we relaxed this timeframe and asked about use in the past 3 months.

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[69] Roger Tourangeau, Lance J. Rips, and Kenneth A. Rasinski, *The Psychology of Survey Response* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

F e e d b a c k   f r o m   O u r   P a r t n e r s

At the end of the beta testing phase for each survey, we compiled the data for each of the 8 pilot test institutions and wrote a report describing the feedback from their users.[70] We then asked each pilot tester to assess the report and their experience administering the survey. Overall, the archivists reported that the data confirmed some of their assumptions about their users. However, most archivists also found some data surprising. For example, one pilot tester was surprised that so few users had used the online finding aids (Repository B). Some of the comments were very complimentary. One archivist suggested, "I would like to conduct this survey on a bi-annual basis to track where we are improving and where we are falling short. Survey results are also tremendously useful for illustrating the need for more resources and the ability of even small things to make a huge difference" (Repository H). Another archivist suggested that she would report some of the data in the archives' annual report (Repository D).

Some of the pilot testers indicated they would make changes to archives services based on the results of the survey. One archivist was grateful to have hard data and noted this experience provided a "chance to keep tweaking what I do" (Repository F). Another suggested that she would add more material to the tutorial on her website to help educate visitors about using the archives, and yet another indicated that she would modify her orientation sessions and add information about navigating the archives' website to overcome some of the problems the respondents had with it (Repository B). Overall, 6 of our 8 pilot testers indicated they would use the data from the evaluation study to help with decision-making as Weiss suggests,[71] and 5 indicated that they would report the findings in their annual reports or to their library managers to help them make appropriate decisions concerning the archives.

All partners found the information in the report helpful, and 4 indicated interest in conducting further surveys. One archivist, however, suggested she had difficulties convincing her staff to help her compile email addresses, as they found this task very time consuming. Although compiling email addresses may not seem onerous, overworked staff may not have the time to complete tasks not part of their standard routine.

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[70] We promised our partners and stated in our human subjects' protocol that we would not publish any of the data from the surveys, so we cannot provide any information from the surveys and we cannot identify the institution.

[71] Weiss, *Evaluation,* 25–26.

The Toolkits

After we had finalized the administration procedures, we developed toolkits to help archivists prepare the data for analysis, analyze it, and write reports of their findings. We developed 5 toolkits, one to accompany each questionnaire. Each toolkit includes 7 files. For example, the Researcher Toolkit includes

1. Researcher Questionnaire
2. Administering the Researcher Survey
3. Preparing Your Data for Analysis
4. Excel spreadsheet preformatted for data from the Researcher Questionnaire
5. Precoded Researcher Questionnaire
6. SPSS file formatted for data from the Researcher Questionnaire
7. Sample Researcher Report

The document on administering the survey includes sections on how to customize the questionnaire, how to recruit participants, and advice on requesting ethics review. The precoded questionnaire helps people (particularly on the paper-based questionnaire) translate answers into the codes for analysis. Archivists can use the Excel spreadsheet to enter the data from the paper-based questionnaire or download it from Survey Monkey. Archivists can transfer the data from the Excel spreadsheet to SPSS, if they want to use this statistical package. The Sample Researcher Report indicates one type of report that an archivist can write using the data. In March 2008, we made the toolkits available free on the Archival Metrics website (http://www.archivalmetrics.org). To download the toolkits, however, we require users to register and provide basic demographic information to enable us to track the use of the toolkits.

The Use of the Toolkits

By April 2009, 13 months after we made the toolkits available, 168 individuals had registered and downloaded the toolkits 580 times for an average of 3.45 toolkits per person. We sent everyone who registered an invitation to participate in a short survey to gather feedback on the implementation and usefulness of the toolkits.[72] Of the 168 registrants who received the questionnaire, 59 completed it, for a response rate of 35.1%. We asked which toolkit they had downloaded. Fourteen of the respondents registered, but did not download any toolkits, while 7 downloaded only the Online Finding Aids Toolkit, 6 downloaded only the Website Toolkit, and another 6 downloaded the Researcher Toolkit. The remaining 26 respondents indicated they downloaded more than one toolkit. Overall, 23 respondents downloaded the Researcher Toolkit, while

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[72] We also sent 2 reminders to all registrants who did not reply.

only 11 indicated they downloaded the Teaching Support Toolkit. In total, the 59 respondents indicated they downloaded 88 toolkits for an average of 1.49 toolkits per respondent as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Toolkits Downloaded by Respondents

Researcher Toolkit	23
Online Finding Aids Toolkit	20
Website Toolkit	19
Student Researcher Toolkit	15
Teaching Support Toolkit	11

In an open-ended question, we asked respondents why they downloaded the toolkits. Twenty-one of the respondents provided reasons related to user evaluation. For example, one respondent stated, "I was designing a survey for user testing of a specific online finding aid (the outcome of a project) and wanted to see if I could use all or some of your questions," and another replied, "interest in doing a Usability Survey on our Website's search functions." Ten of the respondents indicated they downloaded the toolkits out of curiosity, having heard about them on a blog or at a conference, and 3 indicated they taught courses related to evaluation and wanted the questionnaires for their students.

The questionnaire also asked which, if any, of the toolkits the respondents used. Only 11 indicated they had used the toolkits, 39 indicated they had not used any of the toolkits, and 9 respondents did not answer this question. As shown in Table 4, 5 respondents used the Website Toolkit, while 4 used the Online Finding Aids Toolkit and another 4 used the Researcher Toolkit. Only 1 respondent indicated use of the Teaching Support Toolkit.

Table 4. Toolkits Used by Respondents

Website Toolkit	5
Online Finding Aids Toolkit	4
Researcher Toolkit	4
Student Researcher Toolkit	3
Teaching Support Toolkit	1

The questionnaire also asked respondents if they planned to use the toolkits in the future and, if yes, which toolkits they would use. As shown in Figure 2, 35 respondents indicated they planned to use the toolkits in the future. Ten indicated they planned to use the Researcher Toolkit, 7 suggested they planned to use the Online Finding Aids Toolkit, and a further 7 indicated they planned to use the Teaching Support Toolkit.
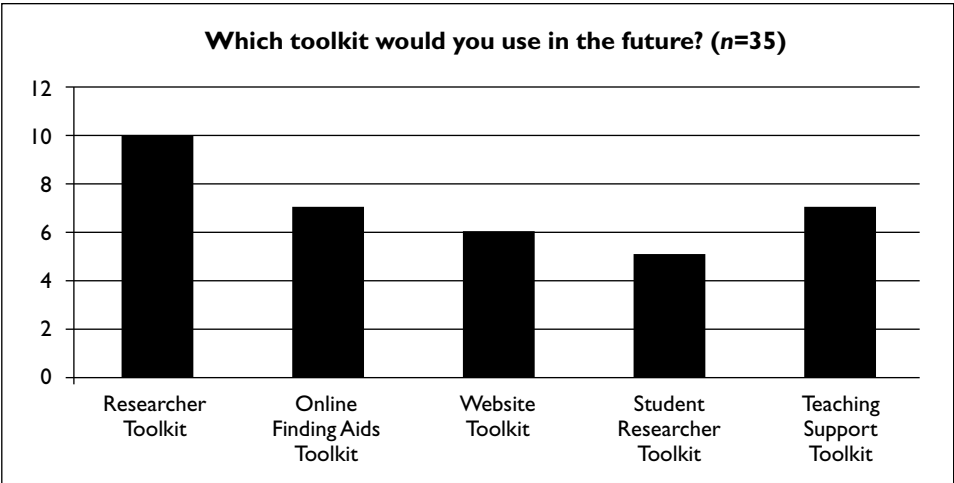
FIGURE 2. Toolkits respondents planned to use.

The questionnaire also gathered data on the parts of the toolkits the respondents had used. As shown in Table 5, 11 respondents used the questionnaires, and 4 used the administrative procedures, but few used the other instruments in the toolkits. It would appear that access to robust questionnaires is more desirable than access to the other components of the toolkits.

Table 5. Parts of the Toolkits Used

Questionnaire	11
Administration instructions	4
Preparing your data for analysis instructions	2
Excel spreadsheet preformatted for data from the questionnaire	2
Precoded questionnaire	2
SPSS file preformatted for data from the questionnaire	1
Sample Report	2

We asked respondents if they modified the questionnaire before implementation. Though only 7 respondents answered this question, 6 indicated they modified the questionnaire.

Respondents who did not use the toolkits they downloaded were asked why. Eleven of the 32 responses to this question indicated a lack of time as their primary reason. As one respondent noted, "Never had the opportunity—swamped with routine tasks and response to patrons. Hope to eventually find time." Another indicated that both lack of time and lack of technical ability caused problems: "I would be the one who would have to install it, but have neither the

time nor the technological experience to do this kind of work." Seven other respondents suggested they planned to use the toolkits in the future or during the school year. Three respondents indicated that their administration presented a barrier to implementing the survey. One respondent explained, "The Dean hasn't approved its use, yet," and another respondent explained,

> I would still like to use some of the toolkits, but we have been directed by our library administration not to diverge from the assessment methods in development for all library departments. Of course, those methods have been in development for over three years, with no product so far. So, I may, yet, get to use the toolkits.

Conclusion

One goal of this project was to develop robust, rigorous, cost-effective, user-based evaluation research instruments and effective administrative procedures that university and college archives could use to gather user feedback on their services and access tools. Thus, this study clearly fits into Paul Conway's user studies framework as an example of activities in Stage 4: Survey. We have developed questionnaires that assess quality (user satisfaction and evaluation with different services) and value (impact).[73] In the future, we also hope to develop a mechanism to enable college and university archives to compare their results with those of similar institutions. We have described these evaluation toolkits at a number of archives conferences; however, no consistent advertising or promoting of the toolkits has taken place. The toolkits are under a Creative Commons license and are distributed free of charge.

Another goal was to test the hypothesis that archives might conduct more user evaluation studies if they had access to appropriate survey instruments and simple administration procedures to ensure adequate response. Our experience thus far is mixed. Many respondents indicated they would like to use the tools to conduct a study, but then gave a number of reasons for not having done so, such as lack of time, lack of expertise, and lack of administrative support. It would appear that, even with robust tools, many archives see the administration of a survey as too onerous. However, it is still early in the adoption cycle, and further monitoring is needed to assess diffusion of the tools. Interestingly, the partners who took part in the pilot testing indicated a high level of satisfaction with the project and the findings from their surveys. The research team, however, worked closely with these archives, sending invitations to potential respondents, analyzing the data, and writing reports of the findings. It would appear that

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[73] Paul L. Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 393–407.

archives need access to a research support center similar to LibQUAL+ or the PSQG survey.

In 2002, Charles R. McClure, R. David Lankes, Melissa Gross, and Beverly Choltco-Devlin's study of digital reference evaluation noted "that ongoing evaluation efforts in many libraries are not the norm [and f]or some library organizations that wish to begin an assessment program, significant preliminary preparation and planning may be needed."[74] Furthermore, they suggest that constraints that affect ongoing evaluation of services include lack of administrative support, the complexity of the service, and the limited skills and knowledge of staff. Based on our experience, we suggest that evaluation in archives is also not the norm, though the number of downloads from the Archival Metrics site indicate interest. To build on this interest, archives need support and commitment from their administration; they need the resources, expertise, and time, as well as robust research instruments to do this work.

For such programmatic change to take place, archivists will need to develop a professional culture that values assessment and continuous improvement based upon user feedback.[75] Such a "culture of assessment" exists "in organizations where staff care to know what results they produce and how those results relate to customers' expectations."[76] Moreover, "organizational mission, values, structures, and systems support behavior that is performance and learning focused" in these organizations. Evidence of a culture of assessment is seen in organizational activities, behaviors, and attitudes. For example, organizational planning documents reference how performance measures will be assessed; how leadership commits to, and financially supports, assessment activities; and how staff value evaluation, including user-based evaluation, and engage in such assessment activities on a regular basis.[77]

Archives also may need a central source to help with the administration of surveys and the analysis of data. If an archival association or archival or government agency helped with the administration and analysis of data from surveys, more North American archives might be able to participate. The PSQG provides a successful model, which North American archives could emulate. In 2007, 133 individual archives and records offices in Great Britain took part in

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[74] Charles R. McClure, R. David Lankes, Melissa Gross, and Beverly Choltco-Devlin, "Statistics, Measures and Quality Standards for Assessing Digital Reference Library Services: Guidelines and Procedures," draft (July 2002), available at http://74.125.93.132/search?q=cache:P8BRvlUbCGcJ:quartz.syr.edu/quality/Quality.pdf+manual+digital+reference+mcclure+evalutation+statistics+measures+and+quality+standard&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=ca&client=firefox-a, accessed 23 February 2010.

[75] Amos Lakos and Shelley Phipps, "Creating a Culture of Assessment," *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4 (2004): 345–61.

[76] Lakos and Phipps, "Creating a Culture of Assessment," 352.

[77] Lakos and Phipps, "Creating a Culture of Assessment," 345–61.

the Survey of Visitors to U.K. Archives.[78] This amounted to a 5% participation rate.[79] This survey is carried out centrally by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), although PSQG (via its National Visitors Survey working party) devises the questions. Offices that wish to participate register with CIPFA, which issues the questionnaires to participating archives with a survey pack. The survey pack consists of materials that explain how to plan, conduct, and administer the survey with information similar to what the Archival Metrics toolkits provide. Archives can enter their data in an Excel spreadsheet that automatically calculates results or send the questionnaires to CIPFA for scanning. In both cases, CIPFA analyzes the data and sends the participating archives a report and descriptive data from its survey.[80] Archives pay for this service, but in Great Britain, archives have come to see the value of feedback from users.[81] Likewise, academic libraries pay for LibQUAL+ and appear to value these results.[82] If the archival community in North America established a similar service, would archives be willing to participate?

It is timely that the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) Strategic Priority Outcomes and Activities for fiscal years 2010–2013 include the development of return on investment (ROI) toolkits under Strategic Priority 3: "Public Awareness/Advocacy."[83] While determining the return on each archival dollar (often derived from taxpayer monies) spent may simply involve questions focused on measuring economic impact of archival use (i.e., how much money do archives' users spend while on trips to the archives?),[84] any thorough assessment of archival ROI should involve user-based evaluation of service quality, determination of user satisfaction, and measurement of impact to the

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[78] Public Service Quality Group, "Survey of Visitors to UK Archives 2007," available at http://www.nca.org.uk/materials/psqg_national_report_2007.pdf, accessed 2 September 2009.

[79] There is no definitive enumeration of the archives in the U.K. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) found 2,150 archives in the United Kingdom in their *Report of the Archives Task Force, 2004,* 71. More recently, the National Archives (U.K.) Archon database lists 2,539 archives in the U.K., at http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/, accessed 23 February 2010.

[80] Elizabeth Scudder, letter to Wendy Duff, 19 August 2009.

[81] Scudder to Duff. The charges are: 1) registration fee: £95 first archives or record office, £25 for each subsequent archives or record office within a local authority; 2) printing of the 8-page questionnaire including the preprinting of the address and postal code and the preprinting of the unique reference number of each questionnaire at £0.24 per survey; 3) scanning of completed questionnaires and providing a set of digital images on disk as appropriate at £0.54 per questionnaire plus a single CD charge of £25. Translating this into American dollars for a single archives with 100 questionnaires, scanned, comes to $226.

[82] LibQUAL+, available at http://www.libqual.org/about/about_lq/fee_schedule, accessed 4 August 2010. The base fee for LibQUAL+ is $3,200, but this can increase if a library wants consultants or any assistance beyond the administration instructions.

[83] Society of American Archivists, "Strategic Priority Outcomes and Activities" (10 August 2009), available at http://www.archivists.org/governance/strategic_priorities.asp, accessed 4 August 2010.

[84] See *Archival Metrics* website at http://www.archivalmetrics.org for a report on our "Measuring the Economic Impact of Government Archives: A Nationwide Study" (29 September 2009), accessed 4 August 2010.

community, state, and society at large. The Archival Metrics questionnaires address some of these issues.

SAA provides the following Public Awareness/Advocacy issue statement, which includes the need for accessibility and repository accountability:

> Archivists must take an active role in promoting the importance of archives and archivists in order to increase public support, shape public policy, and obtain the resources necessary to protect the accessibility of archival records that serve cultural functions as well as ensure the protection of citizens' rights, the accountability of organizations and governments, and the accessibility of historical records.[85]

Public Awareness/Advocacy Priority 5 speaks directly to the relevance of the Archival Metrics Project and the toolkits: "Develop and disseminate a toolkit to measure return on investment of the archives in various archival settings (e.g., government, academic, and private sectors)."[86] Such a toolkit, of necessity, must involve user-based evaluation and the long-term development of impact measures. SAA's list of measurable activities to evaluate its own success largely mirrors the activities and goals of the Archival Metrics Project:

> Measurable Activities:
>
> a. Investigate existing models for measuring return on investment of professional services, and identify potential components of a toolkit that would assist members in such measurements.
>
> b. In consultation with one or more experts on measuring return on investment, develop formulas, formats, and mechanisms that would enable archivists to quantify the contribution of the archives to its parent organization's bottom line.
>
> c. Refine toolkit components via a limited-distribution beta test.
>
> d. Establish an online mechanism for collection and compilation of metrics submitted by toolkit users.
>
> e. Produce, distribute, and promote use of the toolkit to SAA members and the broader archives community.
>
> f. Compile metrics in a national database that may be accessed by appropriate audiences.
>
> g. Evaluate effectiveness of toolkit and refine as needed.

One of the original goals of the Archival Metrics Project was to develop a national database of anonymized survey results that would allow archival

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[85] *Archival Metrics* website, http://www.archivalmetrics.org.

[86] *Archival Metrics* website, http://www.archivalmetrics.org.

repositories and researchers to explore trends over time and study long-term archival impact. The Archival Metrics Project currently lacks institutional or large-scale support from the U.S. and Canadian archival communities. There are, however, promising developments. The toolkits continue to be downloaded at a steady pace. A second Archival Metrics grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission focusing on government archives is underway, and we continue to advocate to archivists, the developers of archival systems, and professional organizations for a culture of assessment. Finally, SAA's recognition of, and advocacy for, the development and testing of ROI toolkits with an associate long-term database hopefully lays the foundation for a more robust culture of assessment within the North American archival communities. With time, perhaps North American archivists will follow the lead set by British archivists and develop "strategies across the archive domain [that give] priority to effective user access alongside the preservation and conservation of the record."[87]

[87] Sexton et al., "Understanding Users," 36.

Appendix 1: [The Repository] at [the University] Researcher Survey

This survey is designed to help us better understand how people use the [Repository] so that we can improve the services we offer. Your feedback is appreciated.

Section 1: Use of the [Repository]
In this section, we ask you to describe your use of our repository.
1. What question or interest brings you to the [Repository] today?

2. Which best characterizes the project that motivated this visit to the [Repository]?
    ☐ Class assignment
    ☐ Dissertation or thesis
    ☐ Publication (e.g. article, book)
    ☐ Curriculum development / teaching preparation
    ☐ Film or video
    ☐ Family history project
    ☐ Administrative or work-related product
    ☐ I'm gathering information, but don't have a final product in mind
    ☐ If other, please specify _____

Section 2: Staff
In this section, we ask you to answer a few questions about our staff.
3. Please provide feedback on our staff.
Rate on a scale from 1-5 by checking the appropriate box.

	Poor				Excellent	No Opinion
	1	2	3	4	5	
Subject knowledge of the staff						
Availability of the staff						
Efficiency of staff in retrieving materials						
Helpfulness of the staff						
Approachability of the staff						

4. In which ways, if any, has our staff helped you today?

Section 3: Services and Facilities
In this section, we ask you to provide feedback on some of our services and facilities.
Archives create resources to help people find materials in the archives and within specific collections. For these questions, we describe some of these resources and ask for your feedback on them.

5. Web catalog of the [Repository's] holdings ([ILS]): This is a listing and/
or guide to collections held in the [Repository] as well as materials held
by other libraries). ([ILS]): can be used to get an overview of what the
[Repository] contains and to identify collections of interest.
   a. Have you used [the ILS] (the web catalog) to locate the [Reposi-
      tory's] materials for your current project?
      ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   b. If yes, please rate the following on a scale from 1-5 by checking the
      appropriate box

	Poor				Excellent	No Opinion
	1	2	3	4	5	
[Local ILS's] content						
Ease of use						
Clarity of language used						
Overall usefulness						

   c. Please elaborate further on how the web catalog met or did not meet
      your expectations.
6. Finding aid / inventory to a specific collection: This is a single document
   that provides information about a specific collection or set of papers,
   including how it was acquired, its scope, and contents. It may also include
   information about the series, files and documents contained in a specific
   collection. A finding aid may be available on a computer in digital form,
   or in the form of a printed document or book.
   a. Have you used a finding aid in the form of a printed document or
      book from the [Repository] for your current project?
      ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   b. If yes, please rate the following on a scale from 1-5 by checking the
      appropriate box.

	Poor				Excellent	No Opinion
	1	2	3	4	5	
Quality of the contentt						
Ease of use						
Clarity of language used						
Overall usefulness						

   c. Please elaborate further on how the printed finding aid met or did
      not meet your expectations.

7. a. Have you used an online finding aid from the [Repository] for your current project?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

b. If yes, please rate the following on a scale from 1-5 by checking the appropriate box.

	Poor				Excellent	No Opinion
	1	2	3	4	5	
Quality of the contentt						
Ease of use						
Clarity of language used						
Overall usefulness						

c. Please elaborate further on how the online finding aid met or did not meet your expectations.

8. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following facilities and services.

Rate each on a scale from 1-5 by checking the appropriate box.

	Completely Dissatisfied				Completely Satisfied	No Opinion
	1	2	3	4	5	
Hours of service						
Temperature						
Lighting						
Noise level						
Study areas						
Furniture						
Informational/ navigational signs						
Physical access to the building						
Microfilm and fiche viewing facilities						
Internet access						
Reference books						
Catalogs/ indexes/ findings aids						
Website						
Exhibits						
Photocopying / duplication services						

9. Please add any specific comments on the facilities and services here.

Section 4: Feedback on your Visit

Although your project may be ongoing, in this section we ask three questions that focus on your visit today.

10. How successful were you in meeting the goals of your visit today? Circle the appropriate number.

Completely Unsuccessful				Completely Successful
I	2	3	4	5

11. Please indicate which statements describe your visit today. Please check all that apply.
    ☐ Not a good use of my time.
    ☐ I accomplished what I set out to do.
    ☐ I learned something new about the archives.
    ☐ I learned something new about the source materials on my topic/ area of interest.
    ☐ I learned something new about my topic/area of interest.
    ☐ My whole approach to my topic/area of interest has changed.

12. If you were unsuccessful in meeting your goals today, what would have helped you to succeed?

Section 5: Background Information

In this section, we ask for some information about you to help us interpret the findings.

13. How long have you been using archival materials?
    ☐ This is the first time
    ☐ Less than one year
    ☐ 1-5 years
    ☐ More than 5 years

14. How many times have you used the [Repository]?
    ☐ This is the first time
    ☐ 2-5 times
    ☐ 6-10 times
    ☐ More than 10 times

15. Have you ever attended a formal training session to learn how to use the [Repository]?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

16. Are you affiliated with [Parent University or College]?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

17. Which best describes your position?
    ☐ Undergraduate student
    ☐ Master's student

☐ Doctoral student
☐ Faculty member or post-doc
☐ University staff
☐ Member of the public

18. What is your age?
☐ Under 18
☐ 18-22
☐ 23-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ 60 or over
☐ I prefer not to answer.

Section 6: General Feedback

In this section, we ask for some general feedback.

19. Overall, how satisfied are you with the facilities, services and staff at the [Repository]?

Completely Dissatisfied				Completely Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5

20. Have you developed any skills by doing archival research that help you in other areas of your work or studies?
☐ No   ☐ Yes   If yes, please describe:

21. If we offered a 1-2 hour orientation session, would you be interested in attending?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

22. We would welcome any additional comments or feedback that may be of interest to our study.

Thank you very much!
For Questions about this Survey:
Local contact name, Title
Organization
Phone, Email address