Benchmarking and evaluation of a dentistry collection using the OCLC Collection Evaluation tool

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The Context

Benchmarking is an effective method for analyzing library collections. It can:

- Increase the effectiveness of library operations;
- Reduce costs;
- Highlight collection deficiencies and determine necessary funding [1,2];
- Enable service expansion [1];
- Benchmark collections against peer institutions and authoritative lists [4];
- Generate data on collection overlap and uniqueness with peer institutions [4];
- Discover collection weaknesses and currency [5];
- Ensure library collections reflect strategic goals of the institution [6];
- The literature contains numerous articles to guide librarians on collection benchmarking with OCLC’s WorldCat Collection Evaluation tool [7-13], however no specialised guidance has been developed for health sciences libraries, such as on:

- How well the tool’s conceptus maps to NLM subject headings
- Special issues encountered when benchmarking a health sciences collection against peer institutions and authoritative lists
- If the WorldCat Collection Evaluation tool can be used to inform collection development practices in health sciences libraries

Research Questions

Q1 How does McGill’s dentistry collection compare against those from peer institutions?

Q2 Is OCLC Collection Evaluation a suitable tool for health sciences collections?

Method

- Cross-comparison between two lists: U.S. research intensive university and Canadian Dental Association/American Dental Association dental schools.
- Selected 6 schools, balancing between Canada and the US, private and public, with a range of student numbers.
- Contacted each institution to request permission to use their holdings data.

Creation of Peer Comparisons

- Comparisons were then set up in advance, as data generation takes 1-2 days.

Analysis of Data

- We adopted Hubbard’s [14] method, and also added our own comparative analysis of print/e-book purchasing in dentistry between institutions.
- Problems arising from use of the OCLC tool were recorded as they arose and analyzed by theme.

Results

- While data for print collections appears reliable, in many cases we were unable to locate the equivalent data for electronic resources.
- Print vs. electronic collection trends at McGill correspond to broader trends in academic libraries.
- Data had to be extracted manually for more complex analysis.
- This process is inefficient and impractical.
- Results could very possibly be inaccurate. (see Discussion)

Discussion

CHALLENGES

- For health sciences subjects, the distinction in the conceptus between NLM and LC is not clear
- The dentistry collection could not be evaluated with the conceptus’ NLM subject divisions - it reported low, inaccurate numbers.
- We used the LC section of the conceptus for our evaluation, sacrificing granularity in order to have accurate collection figures.
- e.g. Periodontics/Endodontics listed together
- The conceptus does not directly map to LC and NLM subject headings for dentistry

Data extraction

- Holdings numbers fluctuated considerably, so all data had to be extracted on one day
- Unable to easily download comparison figures so data had to be manually copied from the tool
- Title comparisons are only available for entire library, not by subject – resulting in huge data sets – 2 GB spreadsheets.

Interface

- No indication is given when limits are applied to data, causing user anxiety
- Does not have any ebook titles catalogued under Dentistry.

BENEFITS

- Enables cross-institution cooperation with easy access to collection data
- Comparing two institutions is simple, multi-peer comparisons are hard
- Very comprehensive help section

References

7. McGill. Benchmarking analysis of print collections between McGill and peer institutions (n=5).
9. McGill. Screenshot demonstrating collection benchmarking between two peer institutions. While the tool allows for relatively easy comparison between two institutions, it is not possible to compare more than two at the same time without downloading very large spreadsheet sheets which are technically difficult to manage.

Conclusion

McGill appears to compare well against peers, but this is based on uncertain data. Further investigation is suggested.

(a) The tool has deficiencies regarding health sciences collections. (b) Many libraries do not submit all of their holdings information to WorldCat. We encourage them to consider doing so.