



# Using Patron Actions to Identify Holes in a Library's Collection

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# Direct Inquiry Methods

- Library suggestion boxes
- Surveys
- These inquiry methods lead to a broad spread of requested materials
- Are these requests reflective of actual need or more pie-in-the-sky dreaming

# Library Catalog/ Discovery Service Logs

- Examining known item searches that produced zero results can help identify gaps in the collection
- Textual analysis of searches that produce few results can help identify new areas of interest
- Examining the search strategies used in catalogs or discovery services may reflect more of a need for user instruction than collection gaps

# Usage Statistics

- Usage statistics of electronic resources can alert libraries to a change in departmental teaching and research
- Similar information can be gathered from circulation statistics of a library's subject collection
- A complete stoppage of use of an electronic resource may be more reflective of an access issue than reflective of the need for the resource
- A decrease in the use of materials may also reflect a change in curricular requirements.

# Citation Analysis

- By examining the bibliographies of faculty research, dissertations, and undergraduate honors papers, libraries can identify resources that the library does not have access to
- To be most effective, the library will want to look for trends or for items that appear multiple times

# Interlibrary Loan Statistics

- ILL statistics show materials that patrons made an effort to get access to
- By examining information about materials that were requested through ILL, libraries can identify materials and subjects that were not covered by other collection development methods
- The requests could reflect a short-term need
- The requests only reflect the needs of people willing to go through the extra steps of placing an ILL request

# Turnaway Statistics

- Turnaway statistics list content that patrons had actively tried to access, but to which the library did not have access
- Libraries will need to examine if turnaways were due to access issues
- The question arises of whether this is a “real” need or more of a curiosity because an article came up as a related article

# Is it all worth it?

- To be most effective, much of the data used will need to be collected over a number of years.
- Gathering, maintaining, and analyzing this data is labor intensive
- After identifying these collection gaps, will there be funding to fill them
- Are libraries better served by filling their collection gaps through consortial partnerships



Thank you  
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Mind the Gap image: [Kristian Dye](#)  
St. Pancras Station image: [The West End](#)