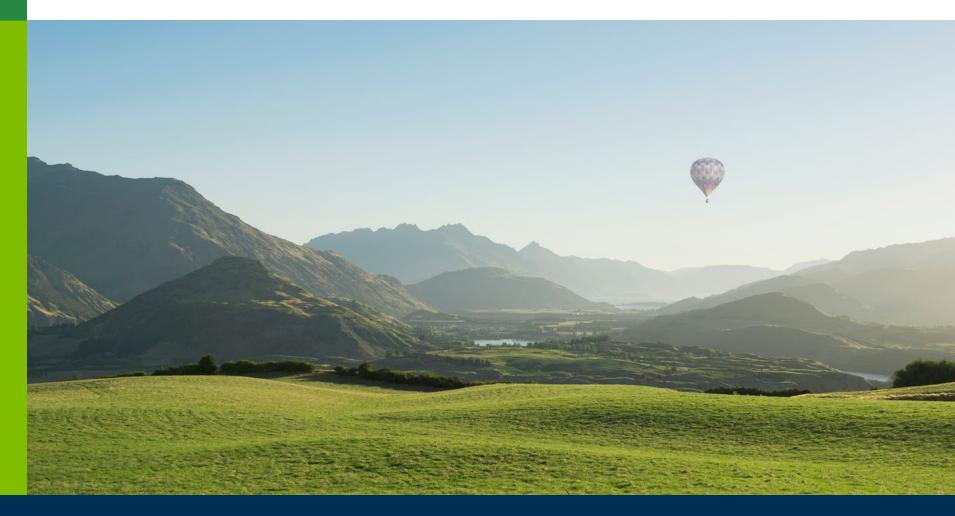# The Library Analytics Platform Playbook

Go Beyond the Traditional Approach

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The landscape of library analytics has evolved in two ways. As library staffs strive to prove their value to their academic institutions, the need for valid data about their services is just the start.
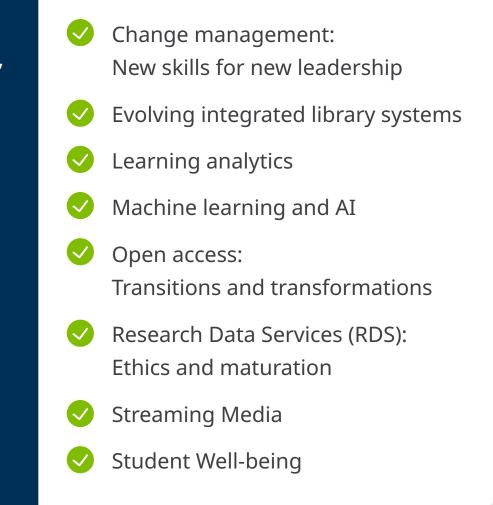
> Understanding how to support student outcomes, faculty engagement, and interactions with other campus platforms and systems allows libraries to provide a holistic (and well-deserved) view into all they do to support the academic institution.

Furthermore, when it comes to obtaining data and integrating user behavior data into library analytics, the traditional approach to manual workflows, offline spreadsheets, and disparate file locations can no longer be the typical process since standards have solidified for data privacy and library staff continue to expand their job roles, leaving time as a very precious commodity.

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Analytics and Trending Themes

Published every two years, "ACRL Top Trends for 2020[1]" summarizes top trends for academic librarians. An effective library analytics strategy can actually support the majority of these trends, specifically **new skills for leadership, learning analytics, research data services, streaming media and student well-being.**

- ✓ Change management: New skills for new leadership
- ✓ Evolving integrated library systems
- ✓ Learning analytics
- ✓ Machine learning and AI
- ✓ Open access: Transitions and transformations
- ✓ Research Data Services (RDS): Ethics and maturation
- ✓ Streaming Media
- ✓ Student Well-being

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The Benefits of an Analytics Strategy

Simply put, with an effective analytics strategy in place for the library, all staff – from directors to collection development and technology -- can do their work better. Accurate and timely data creates the opportunity for evidence-based decision making.

" ———————————————

To help demonstrate the value of library services impact on student success and contribution to the academic institution, library staff need to draw on evidence-based data.

Michael Levine-Clark
University of Denver

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7 Dos of an Analytics Strategy

1. Do Streamline Data into a Single Platform

2. Do Neutralize Vendor / Publisher Data

3. Do Automate Data Updates

4. Do Scale the Harvesting of Large and Varied Data

5. Do Reduce Manual Analysis

6. Do Improve Collection Development and Library Services

7. Do Adhere to Data and User Privacy Standards

And Don't...

Don't overload data just because you have it

Don't continue working with siloed sources of data – chances are they all tell a story together

Don't download spreadsheets or create a manual process of storing data

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Extend the Reach. Extend the Library's Value.

Most library data platforms up to this point have been used to examine and evaluate library content, collections, and usage. However, the library provides more than just access to content.
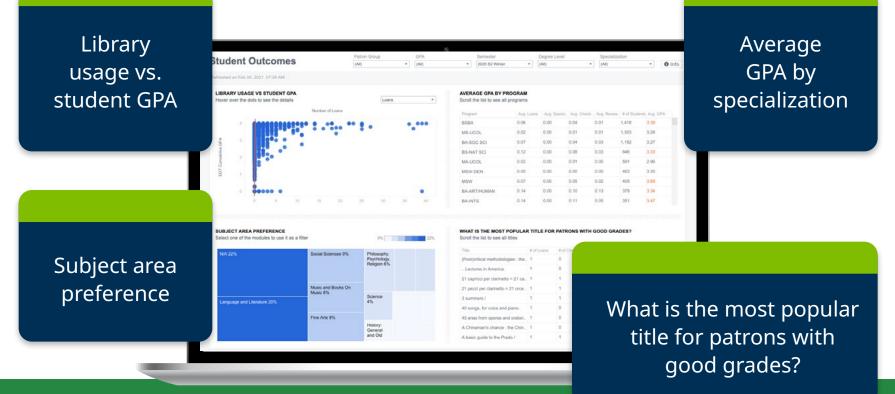
> As long as there are budgets and approvals, providing real-time library data can help your library receive the proper funds it deserves — but this means extending data to showcase the library's influence past its own traditional metrics.

Other data should be included but not commonly analyzed as library usage data includes gate counts, Wi-Fi usage, building service point usage, and usage of co-located services (writing center, tutoring, computer lab, etc.).

The value conversation needs to tell an interconnected story about where and how people are accessing and using library materials. Today, with remote learning on the rise and fewer students in your physical library, having library analytics that allow you to drill down into area of study and authentication information creates the opportunity to spot trends and tells a more in-depth usage story. This aids in interdepartmental conversations with faculty and institutional stakeholders and paints a clearer connection between library analytics, usage and student success.

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For example, a user outcomes dashboard can tell you…

Library usage vs. student GPA

Average GPA by specialization

Subject area preference

What is the most popular title for patrons with good grades?

Utilizing a data platform that connects traditional library data with user behavior and outcome analytics proves the library's value beyond "just a place for research."

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Agility & Automation

Currently, librarians measure analytics (collection development decisions, usage metrics, etc.) through more traditional means, e.g. pulling manually from multiple data sources. More of their time is spent gathering data rather than analyzing it.

> By leveraging an analytics platform using automated processes that harvest and manage data on a continuous basis, the burden is reduced on librarians, enabling them to recover extremely valuable time in their busy work schedules.

They can become more agile with analyzing data and getting a better insight into library processes, using their highly specialized expertise to make informed decisions about their budget, processes and collections.

Additionally, becoming more agile means utilizing a centralized platform for data analysis that provides more advanced metrics with greater context. Libraries should be able to work from one dashboard that provides data on spend and cost, as well as circulation, in real time. This single dashboard will provide automated processes to generate reporting requirements and will have the potential to harvest all the data needed to report to institutional stakeholders.

> Our academic and research libraries are doing more than just managing collection-centric resources, we are contributing to faculty productivities and student success. As we aim to support the goals of our colleges and universities and maintain mission relevance, including technological advancement, we must also understand and support the evolving needs and requirements of our users.

Gwen Evans and Roger C. Schonfeld

It's Not What Libraries Hold; It's Who Libraries Serve Seeking a User-Centered Future for Academic Libraries[3]

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Privacy & Security

Understanding library users and behaviors is key to a library showing their true value. But with user-centric data, comes concerns around privacy and security. This kind of analytical approach, also called learning analytics, can be a difficult method to execute. As Kyle Jones mentions in his article "Just Because You Can Doesn't Mean You Should":

> "learning analytics supports institutional goals [...] to provide insights into, and support of student learning outcomes[2]."

Analytics platforms that adhere to privacy protocols, ensure users can access information without fear and protects the library and its users from breaches of data. They key is for libraries to find an analytics platform that ensures user data is anonymized and is **PII** protected.

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Panorama™ is a next-generation analytics platform with the intention of improving library data analysis so library staff can position libraries as leaders in analytics.

> Learn more about how Panorama analytics can help build a better connection between library data and broader campus metrics.

Learn More

Sources:

[1] ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee. (2020). 2020 top trends in academic libraries:
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[2] Jones, Kyle M. L. ""Just Because You Can Doesn't Mean You Should": Practitioner Perceptions of Learning Analytics Ethics."
portal: Libraries and the Academy, vol. 19 no. 3, 2019, p. 407-428. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/pla.2019.0025.

[3] Evans, Gwen and Schonfeld, Roger. "It's Not What Libraries Hold; It's Who Libraries Serve." Ithaka S+R, 23 Jan. 2020, sr.ithaka.org/
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