

To: MSL Commission
From: Karen Strege
Re: Measuring the Use of Electronic Resources
Date: September 30, 2003

During the past weeks, we have worked to determine which types of measurements should be reported to the Commission regarding the use of MSL's electronic services. Some factors have made this a challenging task.

Although some standards exist for such measurements, such as the National Information Standards Organizations (NISO), not all vendors of electronic resources use the NISO standard. Furthermore, the product, Web Trends, that measures use of our web pages uses different definitions for some its measurements.

We have purchased a license for the Electronic Journal Services, EJS, which will track the use of our electronic journal subscriptions. As you will see from the LISD Services report, we have not started using the service.

We chose a few measures that we believe give the Commission a clear picture of the use of our resources. Not all of these measures are available for all services, but we have attempted to be as uniform as possible.

Number of sessions

Definition: Counts a successful request of a database or a web page. One cycle of user activities that typically starts when a user connects to a database or web page and ends by terminating activity in the resource that is either explicit (by leaving the database through log-out or exit) or implicit (timeout due to user inactivity)

Number of searches

Definition: A search is defined as representing a unique intellectual inquiry. Typically, a search is recorded every time a search request is submitted to the server. Mistyped search strings do not represent unique intellectual inquiries; however, it is difficult, if not impossible, for libraries to differentiate these unintended searches from intended, but unsuccessful searches.

Number of units or descriptive records examined (including downloads)

This measurement includes two sub-measurements. 1. Documents downloaded is defined as the full text of a document or part of a document in the electronic collection that is delivered to a user. (Printed, saved to a disc, and emailed). 2. Documents or a record viewed is when a user views a record without delivery. Some electronic services (reference database) do not typically require downloading, as simply viewing documents is normally sufficient for user's needs.

NRIS is reporting three types of downloads. The first is (please explain here Jim)

Number of visits

A visit occurs when an external user connects to a networked library resource for any length of time or purpose. In the case of a user visit to a library web site, a user who looks at 16 pages and 54 graphic images registers one visit on the server.