Since the 1980s, archivists have begun to understand the need to conduct user studies. However, regular analyses of user data in many repositories remain limited. Archivists need to conduct studies of users more regularly so that archives staff can trace usage patterns and predict patron behaviors. This paper studies user data from one institution that analyzes user types, attendance numbers, and user time spent in the repository. From the data, Small Special Collections Library will be more adequately prepared to help patrons by being able to predict user patterns. Other repositories may also be able to relate to this study, which provides ideas about how to conduct and analyze user data.

Headings:

University of Virginia. Library. Special Collections Dept.

Archives- United States- Use Studies

Archives users

by
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A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Information Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
November 2011

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Introduction

Special collections and archives should regularly conduct user studies. These studies can help archivists to make the case for keeping their repositories open to the public in the face of tight budgets and competition for limited resources. Having an accurate account of who uses archives, when they enter the repository, and why they visit are essential facts that can help to secure the continued existence of the institution. With a regularly kept attendance log, archivists can easily keep track of basic usage patterns. While it is important to know how many patrons visit the repository yearly, it is also useful to trace use during the week and across months, as well as weekend usage if the repository is open. It is also helpful to know how long each visitor stays in the repository and the types of users being served. Patrons use archives for countless reasons, so archivists need to consider all potential user types when asking people to select their user status from among a limited number of categories. Even if a repository keeps an accurate record of user data, it does little without regular evaluation and analysis.

Unfortunately there have been few systematic studies of users. When institutions do conduct these studies, information is not widely shared. Archivists usually have an overwhelming amount of responsibilities to attend to in their repositories, but they need to keep in mind that the main purpose of archives is to provide user-centered services. Materials in archives are preserved with the intention that people will eventually view and make use of collections. While the materials themselves are certainly important, the primary focus of archivists should always be on users. Archival institutions are given the
vital task of making information accessible to people who want to use their materials. Knowing users is the crux of the archivist’s task: it is “only by understanding users [that one] can develop new and innovative services to meet the needs of the users” (Snow). By having a sense of who uses archives and what these users need, archivists can provide better reference services and promote the dissemination of the archives’ materials. Without users, archives have little purpose.

**Small Special Collection Library: The Facts**

Opened in 2004, Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia is home to more than 13 million manuscripts and 325,000 rare books (UVA Library, An Overview of the Collections). There are approximately 3.6 million items in the University archives, and significant holdings include maps, broadsides, photographs, microfilm, audio recordings, and motion picture films (ibid). The collection is strong in American History and Literature, various Western authors, African American history, and is also home to the Jefferson Papers and Virginiana. The University of Virginia’s Small Special Collections Library is open for 64 hours per week during a regular schedule; broken down by week, the repository is open for 12 hours per day on Mondays through Thursdays, and 8 hours each on Fridays and Saturdays (UVA Library, Library Hours).

The mission of Special Collections is to serve “the undergraduate and graduate teaching and research programs of the University” (ibid). Clearly, this mission statement is geared toward the University and its programs that relate to student learning. The statement suggests that the primary users served by the Library are students and professors of the University. While it is essential to serve University-affiliated researchers, as a public institution the Library is obligated to also provide services to the
general public. To determine whether or not the Library serves mostly UVA-affiliated patrons, the log books kept by the repository provide two helpful measures of use: the amount of time different types of users spend in the archives and the number of visits each type of user makes to the repository.

The repository’s log book is located just outside the Reading Room, which users are supposed to fill out in pencil or pen when they enter the Library. It is not mandatory that a patron log his or her information, but circulation desk staff encourage users to input their personal data. Until now, no one has made an attempt to thoroughly analyze the available user data. In summer 2009, the researcher interned at Special Collections and collected some data from the attendance log between 2006 and 2008. The data collected then only included Saturday mornings before 1PM and Monday through Thursday evenings after 5PM. This paper analyzes all user data available from FY 2006-2007 to FY 2008-2009.

By examining the entire contents of the attendance log book, it will be possible to discover whether or not UVA researchers are the primary users of the Library. In addition, it will be possible to see when users enter the repository, when they leave, usage patterns across time, and frequency of visits by different user types, both UVA-affiliated and other researchers.

The mission of Small Special Collections Library strongly suggests that UVA students and professors are the main users of the archives. However, the vast array of content available in the archives and the accessibility of the Library to the general public imply that people from outside the University system can also find great value in using the repository’s materials. Researchers affiliated with the University logically have the
advantage of proximity to visit the Library more often than non-UVA researchers. However, a number of non-UVA affiliated users probably live close enough to regularly visit. With the nature of the materials available, the Library likely also assists many other non-UVA users, although not as many, who have traveled across the state or country to view and use the materials.

With the available user data from Small Special Collections Library, three main areas about users can be analyzed: user categories, attendance numbers, and user time in the repository. The following research question will be addressed: what patterns can be discovered from the user data that will help archivists to improve user services? The following hypotheses try to expose the most important trends that can be gained through an analysis of the available user data.

**User Categories:**
1. Users who marked that they were independent researchers (G) and non-UVA patrons (D, E, or F) will stay for a longer amount of time in Special Collections than users who are affiliated with the University of Virginia (A, B, or C).
2. Researchers affiliated with the University (A, B, or C) will visit the archives more often than non-UVA users (D, E, F, or G).

**Attendance Numbers:**
3. Weekend attendance numbers (for Friday and Saturday) will be equivalent to weekday attendance numbers if the repository stayed open for the same hours.
4. The fall and spring semesters will experience similar patterns in attendance.
5. Attendance numbers will remain fairly consistent from year to year, across months for different fiscal years, and for different user types.

**User Time:**
6. More patrons per hour will enter the repository from 9AM to 11AM.
7. More patrons per hour will leave the repository from 5PM to 6PM.

Before going further, it is necessary to first examine the literature that has been written about user studies in archives.
Literature review

The goal of archives

The ultimate goal of archival work is to “identify and preserve information that is put to use by people for some deliberate purpose” (Dearstyne 77). Archivists’ primary duty should be to make information available to users. In thinking about increasing the usage of collections, a focus on users, rather than materials, is the most effective means of getting users into the repository (Dowler 86). At present, user expectations of archives are consistently inaccurate, which reveals that most archivists do not know what users either want or need (Yakel, Tibbo 221). To find out what users actually want, it is helpful to know who users are and what questions they bring with them into the repository. Focusing on users can help archivists learn what materials are most sought after.

While not very many archives in North America have systematically studied their users, many archivists have increasingly realized the importance of designing systems to evaluate archives users (Duff, Yakel 573). Since the early 1980s, archivists have become more focused on the idea that user evaluation studies are needed. However, many are concerned about the continued shortage of research that has been done, as well as lack in shared findings (Harris 2). User studies are needed to assess archives so that resources can be catered toward the needs of users. The SAA Task Force report Planning for the Archival Profession concluded in 1986: “at present, the many possible uses of archives are not widely recognized and archival records are underused” (Dearstyne 22). Studying users and their behaviors should be a top priority so that services can be improved and archivists can have a greater impact on the user community.
Users defined

Archivists may define ‘users’ of archives as “anyone who employs records or seeks information about them, or uses other systems and services provided by an archival institution or records management unit, for any purpose” (Yeo 26). With this broad definition, users can include both visitors to the repository and individuals seeking information online. Users can come across archival materials either directly or indirectly and reap the benefits of information from the repository. With the availability of online records searching, virtually anyone can come across records of interest. Archivists need to keep in mind that the opportunity for more users to access the archives means that users are likely to come from a variety of backgrounds and will have a wide array of needs. Archivists in the 21st century have the added responsibility of ensuring that they are meeting the needs of these users.

Other than dividing users into categories that describe who they are, users can also be categorized by their specific information needs. Adams recognizes that there are two types of user behaviors in the archives: researchers and information seekers (27). Users engaged in research are usually more involved in projects that may require use of a variety of archival materials for the purpose of creating “new knowledge” (Adams 27). Researchers can spend a lot of time in the archives, as their purposes may involve in-depth study. Information seekers, in contrast, usually search for facts in order to address specific questions. These users may or may not spend a great amount of time in the archives, depending on how long it takes to find relevant information. It is important for archivists to understand the difference between researchers and information seekers so that users are able to get the most out of their archives experience.
The need for user studies

Several authors have written about the lack of user studies and the pressing need to create reliable assessments of users in repositories. Information about users in archives is usually incomplete because statistical information is not often analyzed if it is even kept (Freeman 114). When archives do compile user data, the information is usually confined to annual reports (Dowler 79). Without regular statistics to find out who these archives users are, archivists tend to make assumptions about their users. For example, some archivists assume that their user base consists primarily of historians and academic researchers. Many archivists believe that they instinctively know who their users are, but lack of substantial data fails to illuminate these inhibitions (Maher 17). Systematic user studies are needed so that archivists can know with confidence who uses their repositories.

Freeman says that archivists incorrectly assume that scholars are the primary users of archives, when in reality the highest numbers of users in public institutions are usually ‘avocationists’ (113). By avocationist, Freeman is referring to an individual who uses the archives for ‘fun’ or as a hobby, rather than for purely academic research. Other studies indicate that administrators are actually the primary user population in many institutions (Yakel, Bost 596). The result from these studies shows that academic researchers are not necessarily the primary users of archives; archivists should be aware of this possibility for their own institutions. Standard user studies should be regularly conducted so that archivists learn who their users are, which can then help archivists enhance user services based upon their findings.
A related issue that some archivists will need to overcome is the “adversarial” relationship that sometimes exists between archivists and ‘avocationists’ which include a large number of genealogists (Freeman 113). Freeman suggests that this relationship exists because archivists make a distinction between ‘fun’ and ‘serious’ research (113). Genealogy, which can be considered a hobby, may seem less significant in archivists’ eyes when there are scholars simultaneously using the repository to conduct academic research. However, genealogists make up a significant number of users to archives, and their requests for help should not go unnoticed. In many repositories, genealogists are actually the fastest growing group of researchers (Grabowski 467). Before assuming that certain users should be given higher priority over other users because of their user status or information need, archivists should have a basic understanding of how their user community is composed, as well as how they can provide the most resources and assistance to the people who would benefit most.

Archivists are sometimes unsure whom they should serve. Even when a repository’s mission statement makes clear that the primary role of the archivist is to serve the needs of historians and academic researchers, other user groups deserve fair treatment and attention to their specific needs (Cook 124). Archivists should take care in determining the amount of reference time he or she will provide for different types of users and for different kinds of questions.

Scholarly use of archives seems overrated because there are many other types of users in repositories: administrators, genealogists, lawyers, amateur historians, librarians, and archivists are all examples of archives users besides those in academia (Dowler 76). In addition, archives users have grown most rapidly in nontraditional fields such as
ecology, archaeology, urban planning, and local history (Pugh 39). Some archivists believe that their user body comes primarily from the social sciences, but this is surprisingly not always the case. One interesting find from T. Michael Childs’s SILS master’s paper on the scholars of Documenting the American South, an archival collection for Southern history, literature, and culture, found that a majority of respondents to his survey came from the hard sciences, rather than from the liberal arts (14). Users of archives are much more diverse than many archivists believe, and it is important to understand who these users are in order to better assist them.

User studies in practice

Some studies have been conducted in order to try and understand who users of archives are so that reference services can ultimately be enhanced to meet users’ needs. An analysis of user data at NARA found that there were several types of users, and that more diverse users visited the archives with the introduction of new records into the repository. Particularly with the advent of electronic records came a more diverse community of users, searching for records of personal value (Adams 21). By developing access to records in electronic format, potential users were made more aware of the resources available to them, thus enabling more people to make use of the materials than ever before. One user dynamic that remained the same over time for NARA was that individuals searching within the social sciences made up a central part of the user body (Adams 29). Through the systematic study of the user body, NARA is able to trace user patterns. With this knowledge, NARA is definitively able to provide enhanced services to users because these facts allow the agency to know the user community’s composition and needs.
The Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C. also successfully implemented a user-centered focus in their mid-1980s study. The AAA found to their surprise that nearly one-third of their users were private individuals conducting their own research for various reasons such as genealogy, simple curiosity, or researching their own art holdings (Freeman 115). The point that the AAA took away from this study was that historians were not the most significant users of the archives, as had been previously assumed. This information allowed the AAA to recognize that a noteworthy number of individuals visited the archives for more personal reasons, giving the institution the opportunity to gear information and resources to these users.

A survey of archives in the College and University Archives Committee in the early 1980s was conducted to study the growth and development of academic archives, which define the largest group of repositories. A random sample of 110 United States institutions belonging to the College and University Archives Committee met with a 95% response rate (Burckel 413-414). Results from the survey showed that students and members of the community made up a larger proportion of patrons at public institutions than at private facilities (Burckel 422). In contrast, private institutions received more usage from administrators and community outsiders (422). The committee also found that 25% of all repositories were open for fewer than 20 hours per week, while an equal percentage of archives were open for more than 40 hours per week (Burckel 422). Finally, large institutions overall had a higher percentage of student users than small archives (422). While college and university archives have unique user bodies that are dependent on region, size, collection type, and various other factors, it is still valuable to collect data from multiple institutions so that patterns about usage emerge. Archives that
do not currently have regular user studies in place can learn from these studies and begin regularly conducting their own analyses.

As a whole, use data that is available shows that academic archives see the highest volume of patrons in the middle of each academic semester, but the largest amount of records used per patron actually occurs during summer and semester breaks (Maher 16). Knowing this information can give archivists forewarning to ensure that enough staff time can be dedicated to reference and research requests during high points of the school year (Yakel, Bost 608). Being able to predict patron behavior allows time and resources to be put to use more efficiently. More importantly, when archivists are adequately prepared for an influx of users and increased usage of materials, it increases the opportunity for each user to receive adequate service.

Finally, one of the major projects undergone in recent years to bridge the gap in user studies is the Archival Metrics Projects, which aims to “promote a culture of assessment in the archival domain by creating standardized user-based evaluation tools and other performance measures” (Duff, Cherry 500). Specifically, the researchers behind the project are focused on the impact of archival services on users, as well as the impact of archival orientation sessions (500). While the project does not specifically target who uses archives, the idea behind the Archival Metrics Project addresses the need of archivists to understand the user better in order to make positive changes in archival programming and services.

**Why systematic user studies are not widespread**

Although there have been a handful of published user studies, all-in-all they are few and far between. Significant reasons that archivists do not carry out user evaluation
studies include lack of time, money, and expertise (Duff, Dryden 159). However, institutions need to realize the benefit that can be drawn from analyzing their users. With statistical data, it may be possible to gain more funding for the repository because patron usage and use of materials in the archives provides raw data that shows precisely the number of individuals who found value in visiting the repository. The data may also help archivists tune their sights into ways to improve services for users. Archivists should recognize that the time taken to analyze user data is worth the effort when archivists can find ways to further benefit their users. Finally, expertise should not be a reason for failure to conduct a user study. There are at least a handful of user studies that can be drawn from to meet each institution’s needs. Taking a proactive stance in conducting systematic user studies can be of great benefit to the institution that decides to take on the challenge.

Paul Conway says the issue that archivists often encounter is not a problem of will, but a problem of method, particularly in providing continuous analysis about users (395). These archivists may conduct a detailed user study once or twice, and then fail to follow up on a regular basis. User dynamics can change from year to year, so it is necessary to conduct more long-term user studies. Over time patterns will emerge that can help archivists predict usage patterns in the future. If usage declines significantly for a particular user group or during a particular time, the archivist should likely be able to trace possible reasons for the downward trend. Conway states that archivists need to find a continuous user study program using a systematic framework (405). His 1986 article provides a basic reference log that encompasses questions such as: who the user is, what he or she is searching for in the archives, what materials the individual found beneficial
to their research, and how they divided their time in the archives (402-403). While somewhat outdated, this reference form is comprehensive in scope and would be beneficial for archivists to incorporate into their archives as a regular user analysis tool.

**What archives need to enhance user services**

On a very basic level, all repositories need standards for measurement. Standards are essential for any user study, from deciding the method of data collection to measuring usage of materials, recording the types of materials used, and creating definitive user categories (Maher 19). Archives also need standard research methods to gather feedback on user interactions with staff, the repository, and access tools (Duff, Yakel 577). Enforcing standards is the first step toward the creation of a reliable user study. Looking beyond archives and special collections can also help archivists learn how to properly conduct user studies. Professions such as librarianship have made extensive use of studying their users, so archivists can learn from library studies which methods to use and what questions to ask users (Freeman 117). By modeling what other professions have done to measure users and user services, archives can learn by example.

One problem that archivists sometimes encounter when they conduct user studies involves asking open-ended questions. Archivists will ask that users write down the reason for their visit in short answer form, without a limited set of options to choose from. With the freedom to write practically anything, users can provide a plethora of answers that can be difficult to code because there is no controlled vocabulary (Yeo 37). To avoid this situation, it may be helpful to give users a list of options to choose from, with the ability to select an alternative option for special visits not covered by the list. Depending on the number of patrons who visit the repository and how often the data is
analyzed, it is probably worth the archivist’s time to create a finite set of options. A list is also beneficial when trying to determine who users of archives are, which often helps the archivist determine the expertise level of the user.

Archivists sometimes overestimate the ability of users to effectively use archives, so dividing users into categories is one way to help bridge the knowledge gap that exists between the archivist and the user (Yakel 112). The University of Illinois Archives recognizes six standard categories of users: administrative staff, faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, public, and other universities (Maher 17). This list of finite options works for this particular university setting in determining who their users are. When an archivist knows that a user is an undergraduate student, the archivist can usually assume that the student will have a different set of needs than a faculty member. Archivists should consider the type and size of their institution, as well as types of users known to use the repository when making their own user categories to divide users.

Studying users in archives requires both diligence and patience. A serious commitment to user studies requires changing the way many institutions currently track users and usage. As a profession, what archives need overall to improve user services are better forms, procedures, and approaches to help archivists “thoroughly understand researchers’ purposes and the significance of the information derived from the archival material” (Dearstyne 79). In addition, archivists need to conduct direct and continuous user evaluations so that they know information needs are being met (Conway 405). It will take an added effort for archives that do not currently have regular evaluations of users, but user studies are the foundation to improving services for users.
Dearstyne says that archivists need a marketing strategy to publicize the archives; through research use, the significance of the archives can be made known (85). Having an awareness of archival holdings and what materials get used is a significant step toward generating more users to the archives and creating advocates for archival use (Grabowski 471). When archivists know that particular items in their collection are valuable to users, they can advertise significant items from the collection and draw in users who would otherwise be unaware of the materials. Only by tracking data consistently over a number of years can user and usage trends can be solidly established (Maher 19). The decision to establish regular user studies requires time, resources, and effort on the part of the archivist, but it is a commitment with an end product of enhancing the user experience and gaining more users to the archives by knowing what materials draw users in.

Catering to users in the archives entails that archivists have a thorough understanding of users’ thoughts and behaviors. David Bearman writes that in studying users, archivists need to specifically know “what [users] ask, how they formulate their questions, and what they believe constitutes an answer, or we can’t design systems and approaches to access that will work for them” (404). Effectively studying users requires that archivists take proactive steps to find out what questions researchers have while they are in the archives. Beyond taking statistics, Paul Conway stresses the importance of finding out specifically what resources users look at and whether or not these items are helpful for their research (404). Conway wrote that archivists should regularly question visitors so that their user base can be identified, as well as understand exactly who benefits from usage and how information is transferred and disseminated from both
inside and outside the repository (396). Such qualitative interviews in the archives are helpful in supporting information obtained through quantitative analysis.

Archivists need to think about their archives in a more user-centric way than ever before. Dowler argues that use is the foundation on which archival practice and theory should be constructed; studying the relationship between use of information and ways it can be provided is fundamental (74). In addition to learning who users of archives are, it is helpful to know what projects researchers work on, the timeframes they work within, under what sponsorship, and how these researchers search for and find records (Freeman 112). The fact remains that more systematic user studies are needed, which will help improve services for researchers (Dearstyne 78). Archivists should first examine the users they serve, identify potential users that could benefit from archival holdings, and finally, find out how users go about finding the materials that they end up using (Freeman 119). Once user information is gathered, it would be beneficial to look at each user category and compare them across methods of use, materials used, and the quantity and intensity of use (Dowler 80). By understanding the behaviors of different kinds of users, it is possible to improve reference services geared specifically toward individual users.

**Why user studies should be conducted more systematically**

Currently, special collections and archives that are part of the Association of Research Libraries are examining their impact and value, and are having difficulty solidifying their contributions because of lacking standardized performance measures and usage metrics (Dupont 1). Another study found that in the state of Virginia, 42 percent of the repositories surveyed reported that they did not even know the number of researchers served annually (Dearstyne 78). From a business perspective, understanding the user is a
central component to success. Without having a basic idea about user behaviors, it is difficult to meet their needs. Market segmentation allows businesses to assess demographic variables for significant factors that affect user behavior. Likewise, analyzing archives users by demographics can be helpful in determining who users are, what level of expertise they have with archives, and how archival reference can most benefit these users. When researchers who are given the opportunity to evaluate archival services and programs can be broken down into groups, archivists are provided with the necessary feedback for improving services for those specific user groups (Conway 404). Before conducting such studies, it is important to first have standard measures and procedures.

In tough economic times, archivists increasingly need to show that the work they do is worth continued funding. One of the most significant ways to do this is to provide user study evaluations that defend archives from the users’ point of view (Conway 405). Through careful analysis of users, it is possible to show that archives represent a valuable resource to the constituencies they serve. Tracking usage allows archivists to measure both the impact and significance of research in the repository (Dearstyne 87). If there are more solid evaluations that emphasize an awareness of the value archives can bring to society, more of the population will have a better appreciation for the role that archivists play (Grabowski 472). In addition, archivists will have the added benefit of being able to appraise records, plan programs, and design databases specifically with the user in mind (Orbach 29). A mixture of both quantitative analysis of intensity and qualitative interviewing and sampling would provide a well-rounded approach to learning who uses the archives and how they can best be assisted in the archives (Yakel, Bost 13).
**Methods, problems, and solutions for user studies**

Paul Conway developed a rather detailed reference log framework as a basis for trying to get archivists thinking about ways to implement ongoing user study programs. The reference log allows archivists to gain an understanding of the user and their scope, time frame, and functions of their research questions (Conway 401). Conway suggests that visitors fill out the registration log at the very beginning of a user’s visit to the archives, so that in latter parts of the visit archivists can follow-up with researchers and make more complex analyses based on user responses (400). Rather than waiting for users to leave to study their responses, Conway’s suggestion to look at a researcher’s input beforehand suggests that taking a proactive stance to help users with their queries is a much more helpful approach. Reading what researchers have to say about their visit to the archives before the user leaves also allows the archivist to clarify responses that may be ambiguous.

Yeo says that before detailed information can be obtained regarding user needs, it is important to first understand who users are and how the user community is composed (26). In order to understand exactly who users are, some repositories ask that users define themselves from a pre-determined list of options. The major problem with a prescribed list of categories is that the options are not always mutually exclusive or comprehensive to describe every user (Yeo 37). For example, an undergraduate student conducting personal genealogical research in an archive unrelated to school could be considered both an undergraduate and a genealogist simultaneously. It is not always clear to users how they should define themselves. There is no all-purpose solution for an individual who
feels that he or she belongs to more than one user category except to ask that the individual choose the one option that best describes him or her.

Some institutions follow a ‘reader day’ metric, which only looks at the total number of visits to archives per month or year (Dupont 9). The major problem with this scenario is that users who visit the archives for 5 minutes are given the same weight as a visitor who stays in the archives for 5 hours. While knowing how many users enter the archives is important, it is sometimes more important to know how long users stay in the archives. Archivists can get by the issue of how long patrons use the archives by simply providing a space for them to write how long they spent, or by having the time that they entered and the time that they left (Yakel, Bost 10). However, many users are apt to forget to write down this information if not reminded, particularly when asked to record the information at the beginning of a visit to the repository.

Overall, archivists need to be careful when evaluating data. Some repositories count user visits based on the archives’ mission and the “utility of the information derived” from using the archives (Dearstyne 80). Such qualitative measurements should be cautiously measured. Some patrons only use the archives for a few minutes, while other users spend an entire day researching. The institution should decide how to count user time spent in the repository, and whether or not to count users who make quick visits. Also, some users find valuable information related to their search, whereas others find only scraps of useful information. Repositories may want to consider the value that users found during their visit by the usefulness of the materials they found and used. Evaluation of users can take many forms, so it is vital that archivists begin user studies.
knowing precisely what they want to study and how to go about measuring these
variables most efficiently and effectively.

Methodology

The researcher aimed to discover user patterns from the available data so that
Library staff could learn about their users and have the ability to improve user services.
The three main areas of study were: user categories, attendance numbers, and user time in
the repository. This user study explores and analyzes patron data from the print
attendance log provided outside of the Reading Room of the Small Special Collections
Library at the University of Virginia. The researcher compiled the data into a Microsoft
Excel 2007 spreadsheet, beginning with the earliest available log information for fiscal
The earliest data for FY 2006-2007 began on the afternoon of August 31, 2006; data for
2006 prior to this date could not be found.

The columns in the attendance log for patrons to record their information
included: date, the patron’s name, home city and state, time in, time out, and current user
status. The top of each log page contained a key to help the patron check the correct box
describing their current status. The current status indicates user type: UVA affiliation or
non-affiliation and whether or not the patron is a student, faculty or staff member, or an
independent researcher.

The researcher did not record the names of any patrons, nor his or her home city
and state. The researcher did not record this data because of its personal nature. In
addition, some patrons likely recorded one of two different possibilities: his or her
hometown growing up or current residence. With the possibility for varying answers, the
researcher determined not to examine home city and state. If the patron left any information blank, then the researcher left these cells blank in the Excel spreadsheet with the exception of the date. By looking at the dates from other patrons before and after, in most cases the researcher could assume on what date each patron visited the repository.

The researcher recorded the user status for each patron listed in the attendance log. Individuals checked one box from the attendance log that asked for his or her “current status.” The options were: A) UVA undergraduate, B) UVA graduate, C) UVA faculty/staff, D) non-UVA undergraduate, E) non-UVA graduate, F) non-UVA faculty/staff, and G) other/independent researcher. Approximately 1.1% of patrons from this study checked more than one status; the researcher recorded when patrons checked several user statuses, but compiled the data in a separate table from users who marked only one user status. For example, if a patron checked both B and C, the researcher kept track of the information in a table where other users marked multiple user statuses. The researcher did not use the table with multiple user statuses in this paper because these individuals could not be identified by their primary user status. Representing only one percent of the user population, the researcher determined that disregarding the user status of these patrons would not significantly affect the outcome of calculating user statuses.

Finally, a handful patrons incorrectly recorded time in and time out data. For example, if a patron wrote that they entered the repository at 10:45AM and left at 10:35AM, the researcher recorded the data into the Excel spreadsheet but did not use the information for the tables and graphs.
Results

The data is divided into three main sections: user categories, attendance numbers, and user time in the repository. The following graphs illustrate the information that the researcher obtained from the attendance logs:

- **Graphs A and B:** Number of patrons in each user category
- **Graph C:** Amount of time different user types spent in the repository
- **Graphs D through H:** Number of patrons by day of week, month, semester, and year,
- **Graphs I and J:** Time and number of patrons entering and leaving Special Collections

A total of 9,558 patrons recorded their information into the log book from August 31, 2006 through June 30, 2009. Of these total patrons, 8,890 (93%) of them checked only one user category, while 109 patrons (1.1%) checked more than one. 477 patrons (5%) decided to leave the information blank. UVA-affiliated researchers (user categories A through C) made up 5,881 patrons (61.5%) while non-UVA researchers (user categories D through F) made up 885 patrons (9.3%) and independent researchers (user category G) made up 22.2% of patrons. The following chart identifies the key of user categories that the log book contained on top of every page.

**Chart 1: User Categories Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>User Category</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>UVA undergraduate</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Non-UVA undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>UVA graduate</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Non-UVA graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>UVA faculty/staff</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Non-UVA faculty/staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Other/Independent researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**User Categories**

Of the seven user groups given for users to select from in the attendance log book, surprisingly, a total of 2,690 users (28.1%) were UVA undergraduates. Breaking down UVA undergraduates across the three fiscal years, UVA undergraduates represented
nearly 37% of the attendance log in FY 2006-2007, whereas in the following fiscal years UVA undergraduates represented 26% and 27.63% of users respectively. According to Graph A below, 1,126 UVA undergraduates entered the repository in FY 2006-2007, while only 785 UVA undergraduates entered in FY 2007-2008, and 779 UVA undergraduates entered in FY 2008-2009. With respect to total attendance numbers per fiscal year, the percentage of UVA undergraduates who came into the repository in ’06-’07 exceeded the number of UVA undergraduates in the following fiscal years.

**Graph A: Number of Patrons By Type of User (by FY)**

Other significant users to the repository included UVA graduate students, with 1,973 total visitors, or 20.6% of users across the three fiscal years. Of UVA graduate students, 535 (17.5%) entered the repository in FY 2006-2007, while 796 (26.4%) entered in FY 2007-2008, and 642 (22.8%) entered in FY 2008-2009. As a percentage of the total number of UVA graduate students per fiscal year FY 2007-2008 was highest, but the figures remained fairly consistent.
Independent researchers also represented a significant number of total patrons, with an overall 2,124 users (22.2%) across the three fiscal years. Broken down by fiscal year, 643 (21.1%) independent researchers entered the repository in FY 2006-2007, while 777 (25.7%) entered in FY 2007-2008, and 704 (25%) entered in FY 2008-2009. As a percentage of the total number of independent researchers per fiscal year, the numbers remained consistent.

In estimate, approximately two-thirds of researchers who used Special Collections within the three-year span of the collected data were affiliated with UVA, while the other one-third were either from other universities or classified themselves as independent researchers. The researcher used an independent sample t-test to compare the number of UVA and non-UVA researchers. Assuming unequal sample size and unequal variance, UVA researchers visited the Library in much greater numbers (M= 653.4, SD= 244.3) than non-UVA researchers (M= 250.75, SD= 279.69), \( t(18)= 3.52, p= .002 \).

If UVA versus non-UVA affiliations are eliminated, then undergraduates represented 29.6% of total users, graduate students made up 24.5% of users, and faculty/staff made up 16.6% of Special Collections users. Still, the number of non-UVA affiliated academic researchers altogether is very low and does not significantly affect user status as broken down by undergraduate, graduate, and faculty/staff categories.

Overall, the total amount of researchers using the repository remained steady across the three fiscal years. A total amount of 3,329 patrons entered the Library in FY 2006-2007, while 3,102 patrons entered in FY 2007-2008, and 3,127 patrons entered in FY 2008-2009. It is clear from Graph B below that UVA-affiliated researchers made up more researchers than any other user type. However, independent researchers also made
up a significant proportion of researchers at 22.2% of total users, just behind UVA undergraduates as the second largest number of users. The only assumption that can be safely made about independent researchers is that they did not affiliate themselves with an academic institution; all other user status options assume affiliation with a university or college.

According to the number totals, UVA faculty and staff used the repository somewhat frequently, but not with the same abundance as UVA students or independent researchers. UVA faculty/staff made up 12.7% of total users to the repository, at 1,218 visits across the three fiscal years. Non-UVA undergraduates used the repository least over the three fiscal years with 144 (1.5%) of total users. An almost equal amount of non-UVA graduate students and non-UVA faculty/staff, 372 and 369 patrons respectively, or 3.9% each, used Special Collections over the three fiscal years.

**Graph B: Number of Patrons By Type of User (across 3 FYs)**

Despite the fact that UVA-affiliated researchers are the repository’s most frequent visitors, on average these users actually remained in the Library for the least amount of
time. While UVA researchers spent on average from 85.21 to 94.1 minutes in the archives for every sign in, non-UVA researchers spent on average from 194.71 to 261.04 minutes in the archives. Graduate students from both UVA and non-UVA distinctions spent more time in the archives than any of their counterparts, at 94.1 minutes and 261.04 minutes respectively. Undergraduates on average spent the least amount of time in the archives, with UVA students logged in the repository for 85.21 minutes and non-UVA undergraduates logged for 194.1 minutes.

Taken as a whole, UVA patrons spent on average about 1.5 hours in the repository per visit, while non-UVA patrons spent upwards of 3.5 to 4.5 hours in the archives. The amount of time varied most widely for non-UVA researchers, particularly because non-UVA graduate students spent on average a solid 4.5 hours in the repository per visit. Despite lower attendance numbers to the repository by non-UVA researchers, they make up for attendance by spending longer amounts of time in the archives. Finally, independent researchers were in the middle between UVA and non-UVA researchers at 145.24 minutes (about 2.5 hours) in the repository for every visit. With both a high number of patron visits to the repository and a significant average amount of time spent in the Library, independent researchers are noteworthy users of the archives.

The researcher used an independent sample t-test to compare the mean number of minutes between UVA and non-UVA researchers. Assuming unequal sample size and unequal variance, UVA researchers stayed in the repository for significantly less time (M= 89.2, SD= 75.5) than did non-UVA researchers (M= 169, SD= 144.6), t(2004) = 20.74, p < .001.
Graph C: User Minutes By Type of User (across 3 FYs)

Attendance Numbers

The number of patrons who visited the archives usually began strong during the beginning of the week, and consistently dropped off as the week progressed. Graph D clearly illustrates this trend. On Fridays and Saturdays the repository was open for 8 hours, but on Mondays through Thursdays the archive was open for a total of 12 hours each day. The repository is always closed on Sundays. Open hours could change during the academic year, particularly for school breaks and holidays, but this basic schedule is consistent from year to year.

It would be interesting to see how attendance numbers for Fridays and Saturdays compared to other days of the week if the Library was open for the same hours. Assuming that patron attendance remained steady, an increase in hours on Fridays from 8 hours to 12 hours would result in attendance numbers greater than both Mondays and Tuesdays. Taking FY 2006-2007 as an example, 693 patrons entered the Library on Mondays, 655 patrons on Tuesdays, 594 patrons on Wednesdays, 583 patrons on
Thursdays, 491 patrons on Fridays, and 323 patrons on Saturdays. If Fridays and Saturdays were open for the extra 4 hours, then Fridays could expect to see 736 patrons and Saturdays could expect 484 patrons.

The downward trend in attendance numbers from both Wednesdays and Thursdays indicates that users would probably not use the extra hours on Fridays with the same strength as seen in attendance during the beginning of the week. Still, the strength in patron attendance on Fridays when users are given one-third less time to visit the repository signifies that Fridays are significantly busy days of the week for the repository. Because Fridays are the unofficial start to the weekend, it is difficult to conclude precisely how an increase in hours on Fridays would affect attendance numbers.

Finally, Saturdays show proportionally less numbers to the repository than other days of the week. On Saturdays, a total of 900 patrons entered the repository across the three fiscal years. Out of these users, 829 selected one user category. Numbers of attendance were spread evenly across UVA undergraduates, UVA graduates, and independent researchers with 77% of the total number of users on Saturdays. Although Saturdays are not as busy as other days of the week, a significant number of users still use the repository on weekends. Just over half of usage on Saturdays comes purely from UVA students, while 26% of users are independent researchers.
Across all user categories, Chart E below shows the number of patrons per month by fiscal year. A total of 385 UVA undergraduates (38.5%) visited the repository in the month of September across all three fiscal years combined. September 2006 saw a larger number of patrons as a percentage of total users than in 2007 or 2008. Looking at the raw data, 233 of the 500 patrons (46.6%) who used the repository in September 2006 were UVA undergraduates. Therefore, almost half of the total usage was from UVA undergraduates, a higher than normal percentage compared to overall UVA undergraduate usage. Comparatively, UVA undergraduates represented 50 of the 218 patrons (23%) in September 2007 and 102 of the 282 patrons (36.2%) in September 2008.
Graph E: Number of Patrons by Month (by FY)

*There is no data for July or August 2006. The figure for August comes from a single sheet of the record log that happened to include September 1. The earliest recorded time for this data set is August 31, 2006 at 1:35PM.

Graph F illustrates user attendance numbers across the three fiscal years by month, which shows clear peaks in attendance throughout the academic year. The fall semesters experienced slightly higher attendance numbers than the spring semesters. The most drastic difference in attendance occurred in FY 2006-2007: 1424 patrons (60.2%) used the Library in the fall, but only 943 patrons (39.8%) used the repository in the spring.

The month of October, which signifies fall mid-semester, had significantly more users than any other month out of the year. Spring semester was busiest during mid-semester in March, which is equivalent to attendance numbers seen in both the September and November months. In addition, the spring semester overall had more consistency in numbers; the fall semester experienced large jumps in attendance from September to
October, which receded again in November. Both December and May experienced very similar dips in attendance numbers, signifying the start of winter and summer breaks.

**Graph F: Number of Patrons by Month (across 3 FYs)**

It may be interesting to know whether or not the fall semester is statistically significant from the spring semester. The researcher used an independent sample t-test to compare the fall and spring semesters. Results indicate that the fall semesters (M=373.11, SD=100.1) and spring semesters (M=313.78, SD=24.4) revealed no significant difference between the groups, \( t(9) = 1.72, p = .11, \text{n.s.} \)

**Graph G: Number of Patrons Per Semester (by FY)**
In several of the previous graphs, visual representations show that patron attendance appears higher for FY 2006-2007 compared to other fiscal years, particularly for the fall. However, statistical calculations fail to show conclusive evidence that 2006-2007 is significantly different from other fiscal years. Again, Graph H shows a larger number of visitors to the archives in academic year ’06-'07 in comparison to the following fiscal years. Out of the total number of patrons across three fiscal years, 3,329 patrons (34.8%) visited the repository in FY 2006-2007, 3,102 patrons (32.4%) visited in FY 2007-2008, and 3,127 patrons (32.7%) visited in FY 2008-2009. While a slightly larger number of patrons were recorded in the 2006-2007 data overall, the figure does not indicate that a significantly greater number of patrons used the repository.

**Graph H: Total Patrons By Year**

![Graph H: Total Patrons By Year](image)

**User Time in the Repository**

Out of the total patrons who entered information into the attendance log, 9,489 of them (99.3%) wrote the time that they entered Special Collections, while only 5,308 patrons (55.5%) wrote the time that they left. Only 64 patrons (.67%) left both time in and time out blank, and interestingly, 5 patrons (.05%) wrote the time that they left the Library but not the time that they entered. In FY 2006-2007, patrons who recorded data
for both time in and time out remained in Special Collections for an average of 121.8 minutes. In FY 2007-2008, that number dropped slightly to an average of 106.4 minutes, and in FY 2008-2009 the average went back up to 117.5 minutes. Across the three fiscal years, the data remained fairly consistent.

From 2006 to 2008, nearly 40% of patrons entered Special Collections between the hours of 1PM and 4PM, although a significant 22.4% of patrons came in to the Library between 9AM and 11AM. In addition, the lunch hours between 11AM and 1PM saw a steady number of users entering, representing 20% of the total visitors across the three fiscal years. Patrons entering Special Collections significantly dropped between 5PM and 9PM with only 11% of patrons entering the repository between those times. Graph I shows total patron peaks and dips in entrance across the three fiscal years.

**Graph I: Patrons Entering Special Collections (across 3 FYs)**

Of users who wrote the time that they left Special Collections, 43.5% of them left the repository between the hours of 3PM and 6PM. Nearly 20% of the total number of patrons left the Library from 4PM to 5PM. Morning hours showed a significantly small amount of patrons leaving the repository, with only 13% of users leaving between 9AM and 12PM. In addition, the hours between 7PM and 9PM saw only 10% of patrons
leaving Special Collections. Graph J shows patron peaks and dips leaving the repository across the three fiscal years.

**Graph J: Patrons Leaving Special Collections (across 3 FYs)**

![Graph J](image)

**Discussion**

**Limitations**

Human error provides the largest potential for inaccurate information in this study. Users may have written incorrect information either intentionally or unintentionally. Also, some patrons do not even see the attendance book at all, and staff members at the reference desk may occasionally fail to indicate that patron information should be recorded before and after leaving the Reading Room. It is possible that a number of patrons who used the archives are unaccounted for because they either chose not to log their information or failed to see the notebook. When data is recorded in the attendance log, information can be written in the wrong place by mistake, particularly when patrons leave; many forget to write their “time out.” Also, patrons sometimes incorrectly recorded dates; the first person writing his or her information into the attendance log at Special Collections on a given day sometimes accidentally recorded the
date of the last person in the log book from the previous day. When these patrons obviously made this mistake, the researcher corrected the date on the spreadsheet.

As discussed earlier, some users interestingly decided that they belonged to more than one user category. For example, the largest number of users who checked more than one user category said that they were simultaneously UVA graduate students and UVA faculty/staff. It is likely that the patrons who marked that they were both UVA graduate students and UVA faculty/staff were primarily graduate students serving as teaching or research assistants. However, without speaking to these individuals, it is impossible to know for sure.

Some patrons indicated that they stayed in the archives for most of the day, usually from 9AM-5PM. It seems likely that most of these users would have taken a lunch break, but then came back to research in the archives later. Whether these individuals took breaks that were 20 minutes or 2 hours long, the data does not account for the time that patrons may have left for a break and returned later in the day. On the other hand, it is possible that some patrons could have used the library twice in the same day, recording two separate entries. Analysis of the log book did not involve determining whether or not the same individual re-entered the archives on the same day; the researcher counted each entry separately.

With time in and time out data, there are additional limitations. The log book that patrons are supposed to record their data in is located next to a small digital clock. Sometimes patrons do not see this clock, using his or her personal watch instead or simply estimate the time. Additionally, some patrons are likely to round numbers to the nearest 5, and some patrons seem to write the time based on the patron that precedes
them in the log book. An unfortunate occurrence is that just under half of patrons did not write the time that they left Special Collections. It is uncertain for exactly how long many patrons visited the collection and then left. Another limitation with the data is that the earliest data found for fiscal year 2006-2007 began on August 31, 2006 at 1:35PM. The Library kept patron logs prior to this time, but the whereabouts of the beginning pages of fiscal year 2006-2007 are currently unknown.

This paper analyzes the results of data from only one institution. Research should be conducted at other repositories to see if any patterns emerge from other special collections and archival institutions. In addition, the data collected from this study only covers three fiscal years, from which it is possible to start seeing patterns emerge about who uses archives, when patrons enter and leave the repository, and how long visitors stay. However, more longitudinal studies are needed to determine user patterns.

Implications

With the available data, Special Collections should have a better idea about who uses the archives, how often specific kinds of users visit, and usage patterns. By knowing what kinds of patrons the Library serves, staff members know to expect a large number of UVA-affiliated patrons, but also to expect a significant number of independent researchers. Attendance numbers allow the Library to more easily predict which months will be more busy, as well as when to expect higher or lower numbers of patrons at certain times during the academic year.

By predicting the number of patrons and the types of patrons entering the Library, Special Collections can be prepared to provide more services or different kinds of services to patrons. Finally, knowing when patrons enter and leave allows staff to predict
high and low points during the day so that they are prepared to handle requests from more or fewer patrons. The ability to predict user actions and behaviors means that staff should rarely be surprised by types of patrons, attendance numbers, or time users spend in the repository. Other archives and special collections institutions can use the findings from this paper and incorporate ideas into their own user studies. Particularly special collections affiliated with a large public university such as UVA are likely to see similar results. Although the user data provided by Small Special Collections Library presents the results from one institution, similar institutions can probably expect the same kinds of users, behaviors, and patterns.

Analysis and ideas for future research

Although the researcher discarded data about users who checked more than one user category, it is worth a brief discussion here to mention what may have happened to confuse patrons. The largest duo user categories included a combination of UVA undergraduate (A) with some other category, and UVA graduate (B) with some other category. For UVA undergraduates, exactly half of the patrons also marked G, independent researcher. It is possible that these patrons were in fact undergraduates, but they marked G to designate that their research related to personal interest rather than for a class. In the opposite strand, these individuals could have meant that they were independent researchers who were previously undergraduate students at UVA.

For patrons who selected that they were UVA graduate students, over half also chose UVA faculty/staff. In this case, it seems likely that patrons who selected that they were graduate students probably served as teaching assistants or research assistants employed by the University. Another significant user status combination included
graduate student and independent researcher. Just like the case of the undergraduate students who also marked independent researcher, it seems likely that individuals who selected graduate student and independent researcher were simply graduate students conducting personal research not related to their coursework. On the flip side, it is also possible that these individuals were primarily independent researchers that wanted to show their status as UVA alumni.

From the graphs and tables, September 2006 had a higher percentage of UVA undergraduates visiting the Library than in either 2007 or 2008. One possible reason for larger numbers of undergraduates visiting the Library could be that more classes were held in the circulation area or Reading Room for orientation. In years of low attendance numbers, perhaps Special Collections held more classes in other parts of the building where the classes would not disrupt patrons in the Reading Room. Another way that UVA undergraduates could visit the Library in greater numbers is if their professors asked them to visit for a specific task, perhaps even a scavenger hunt. Yet another possibility is that professors took their students to the Library to see an item or group of items on display. If the Library keeps a long-term account of its archival programming, it could be worth looking into why a higher number of undergraduates entered the Library during fiscal year 2006-2007.

It is certainly possible that attendance numbers naturally wax and wane depending on the year. The number of UVA graduate students who visited the repository in 2007-2008 appeared at first glance larger than the other attendance numbers for graduate students, but across three fiscal years there is little data to support a much higher percentage of graduate students entering the Library in comparison to the other fiscal
years. Analyzing attendance numbers over time will allow more accurate calculations to determine whether or not jumps in attendance by certain user types are significant.

Although UVA faculty/staff made up only 12.7% of the total number of users, behind UVA undergraduates at 28.1% and UVA graduates at 20.6%, there are less faculty and staff members than there are UVA students. Proportionate to the entire UVA population, UVA faculty and staff members are represented in fairly strong numbers compared to the University’s students. While there could be a handful of UVA faculty and staff regularly using the repository, representation by use shows that faculty and staff members find continued value in visiting the Library. If Special Collections decided that a study of these individuals deserved closer attention, it could be interesting to learn from what departments these individuals come, and for what purposes they conduct their research. Additionally, if the Library does not include its own staff members in the attendance log, it would be worth learning how often the individuals who work in the repository make use of the collection.

In the Results section, this study found that 61.4% of users were affiliated with the University, while only about 9.3% of users were affiliated with some other college or university. Although non-UVA patrons visited the Library less often, these users spent more time in the repository: an average of 2.5 times longer in the repository per visit than UVA patrons. While UVA students and faculty could visit the repository on impulse, non-UVA researchers probably planned their trips to the Library more carefully because they spent longer periods of time in the archives. In the future, it could be interesting to learn what universities these patrons come from to conduct their research. Knowing how
far some patrons travel to look at archival materials could be valuable information when evaluating the impact that Special Collections has to society.

In this study, independent researchers slightly surpassed UVA graduate students in attendance numbers. These independent users also spent a large amount of time in the Library, with an average of approximately 2.5 hours per visit. As a percentage of the total number of users recorded and time spent in the repository, independent researchers are significant users of the archives. While a number of independent researchers are likely to include genealogists, it is unknown what percentage of these individuals would classify themselves as genealogists, and what other possible user categories could be deduced from this broad user status. Further investigation should be given to break down the all-encompassing “other/ independent researcher” into more specific categories. Distinct individuals may include non-university affiliated historians and scholars, genealogists, librarians, and other professionals. By attempting to find out who these individuals are, Special Collections can have a better idea about the patrons they serve and can gear some of their resources and services to these independent researchers.

Attendance numbers of patrons who visited the archives throughout the year show that the fall semesters see the largest number of users to the archives. Across all three fiscal years studied, the month of October was busiest. The spring semester also had a significant number of users, with a small peak in user attendance in March. The results obtained from observing number of patrons by month shows that attendance is largely determined by the academic calendar. It makes sense that the numbers correspond to the schedules of UVA students, with mid-semester attendance at its highest. Inversely,
semester breaks saw lowest attendance numbers; approximately 200 patrons per month visited the repository during slow months.

Looking at total attendance numbers by days of the week, the number of patrons who entered the repository was highest on Mondays and Tuesdays, following a consistent downward trend through Saturdays. However, with the repository open for one-third less time on Fridays and Saturdays, the number of patrons signing in at the Library on Fridays was significant for the amount of time that the repository was open. While Friday marks the beginning of the weekend, more people used the Library on Fridays in less amount of time. It is logical to assume that many individuals who used the repository on Fridays wanted to log time in the repository before the weekend began. In addition, a number of students probably left their Fridays open for three-day weekends, so it is possible that students had more free time available to visit the archives on Fridays than on Wednesdays or Thursdays.

The Results section suggests a trend in which most patrons who entered the repository on a given day came in approximately after lunch, between the hours of 1PM and 4PM. About half that number of patrons entered the Library between 9AM and 11AM. It is logical to assume that not many people would enter the Library between 11AM and 1PM, as most people take lunch between those hours. With the proximity of the dining hall and restaurants to Special Collections, it is sensible to assume that most patrons would come to the repository after lunch. After 5PM, the number of patrons entering the Library significantly dropped; this suggests that by 5PM, individuals were leaving campus grounds and going home.
Finally, results showed that most patrons left the Library between 4PM and 5PM. By 6PM, most patrons had left Special Collections for the day. For the same reason that the number of patrons entering the Library dropped significantly in late afternoon, the end of the typical workday likely caused the highest number of patrons to leave during the late afternoon hours. The least amount of people left the repository from 9AM to 10AM, and from 6PM to 7PM. In the morning hours, many patrons were likely just getting started with their work in the archives, and in the evening most patrons had already left. A slightly higher number of people left the repository between 8PM and 9PM, possibly because these patrons wanted to get as much done in the archives before the Library closed for the day.

In all, the results from this study seem for the most part straightforward and logical. However, without raw numbers to back up archivists’ assumptions, these claims cannot be properly validated. Further studies should be conducted to try and find out more on who uses the archives, why these individuals visit the repository, what behaviors and expectations patrons have in the Library, and how archival services can be better utilized to fit the needs of users. More in-depth information should be asked of patrons, and regular analyses should be conducted to create a better understanding of the impact that Special Collections provides to users.

**Conclusion**

Archives should strive to be user-centered institutions because patrons are ultimately the ones who make use of the materials found in the repository. Without users, there would be little purpose in preserving and keeping materials in storage for extended periods of time. Users bring value to archival materials through usage, as well as by
sharing and disseminating knowledge from the archives to others. To become a user-centered institution, archives should carry out systematic studies that aim to find out who these users are and why they come to the repository. The importance of conducting regular user studies should not be undermined; in order to get an accurate sense of how to improve services for users, it is essential to know who uses archives and how patrons behave.

The study conducted in this paper found that UVA students made up the primary population of users at the Small Special Collections Library from 2006-2008. Interestingly, it also found that individuals who classified themselves as “independent researchers” made up a significant number of patrons. The study also looked at the amount of time that users spent in Special Collections and affirmed the hypothesis that UVA researchers use the archives in greater numbers, but non-UVA researchers spend a longer amount of time in the archives per visit.

The study also traced usage patterns by days of the week, months, semesters, and years, and found that the figures remained consistent over time. The fall and spring semesters experienced similar patterns in attendance numbers. By day of the week, Fridays seemed to have a large number of patrons compared to Wednesdays and Thursdays, especially considering that the Library closed four hours sooner. Finally, the study negated the hypotheses that more researchers per hour entered Special Collections from 9AM to 11AM and left the Library from 5PM to 6PM. In reality, more users per hour entered the Library from 1PM to 4PM and left from 4PM to 5PM.

With the data available, this study affirmed many assumptions about archives users at Special Collections. This paper also provided suggestions for other analyses that
the Library should consider incorporating into future studies of users. Hopefully through
the study conducted in this paper, other user studies will emerge that can help the
profession more fully understand how to provide enhanced services to users that will
increase overall usage and show that archives still maintain a fundamentally valuable role
in today’s society.
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Freeman, E. (1984). In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User’s Point of View. *American Archivist, 47*(2), 111-123.


University of Virginia Library. Library Hours. Retrieved from http://www.library.virginia.edu/hours.html#SmallSpecialCollections


### Appendix

#### Number of Patrons Per User Type

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<tr>
<td>A) UVA undergrad</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>2,690 (28.1%)</td>
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<td>B) UVA grad</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1,973 (20.6%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C) UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>1,218 (12.7%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D) Non-UVA undergrad</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>144 (1.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>E) Non-UVA grad</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>372 (3.9%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F) Non-UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>369 (3.9%)</td>
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<td>G) Indep. researcher</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>2,124 (22.2%)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3,051</td>
<td>3,020</td>
<td>2,819</td>
<td>8,890 (92.9%)</td>
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#### User Minutes in Repository By Type of User (Avg.)

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<tr>
<th>User Type</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
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<tr>
<td>A) UVA undergrad</td>
<td>85.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>B) UVA grad</td>
<td>94.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>C) UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>87.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) Non-UVA undergrad</td>
<td>194.71</td>
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<td>E) Non-UVA grad</td>
<td>261.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>F) Non-UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>212.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G) Indep. researcher</td>
<td>145.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Number of Patrons By Day of Week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3,329</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>3,102</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>3,127</td>
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### Number of Patrons Per Month

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>469*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>396*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>1,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL (year)</td>
<td>3,329</td>
<td>3,102</td>
<td>3,127</td>
<td>9,558</td>
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</table>

### Number of Patrons By Semester

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>3358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>935</td>
<td>2824</td>
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### Number of Patrons on Saturdays By User Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User Type</th>
<th>Number of Patrons</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UVA undergrad</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA grad</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-UVA undergrad</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-UVA grad</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-UVA fac./staff</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indep. Researcher</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Number of Patrons By Time Entering Special Collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 AM</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>1,104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AM</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>1,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 AM</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 PM</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 PM</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 PM</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>1,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 PM</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>1,204</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 PM</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>662</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 PM</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>338</td>
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<td>6 PM</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>317</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 PM</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 PM</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>106</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3,081</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,095</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,489</strong></td>
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### Number of Patrons By Time Leaving Special Collections

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 AM</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 AM</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 AM</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 PM</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 PM</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 PM</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>581</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 PM</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>658</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>6 PM</td>
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<td>81</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>252</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 PM</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>191</td>
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<td>8 PM</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>1,750</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,802</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,308</strong></td>
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