

Service Trends Charted in Newly Released *ARL Statistics*

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The newly published *ARL Statistics, 1994-95* includes six questions about public service activities that have been collected in the past through the ARL Supplementary Survey: circulations (initial, total, and reserve), reference transactions, and library instruction (group presentations and participants in these presentations). With the recognition that the success of an academic library is dependent not only on resources it houses, but also on how the resources are used by customers, the measurement of service has become increasingly important. Together with the continuing interlibrary loan questions, the new service questions describe a range of public service activities in ARL libraries. Readers should be cautious about using these data for institution to institution comparison because different local policies can influence the measurement of such activities. For example, loan periods vary widely among libraries, and the number of circulation and ILL transactions a library reports depends to some extent on the length of loan periods.

With this in mind, however, it is useful to look at the growth of services in ARL libraries. The accompanying graph illustrates that there has been a significant increase in services delivered to users, without a corresponding increase in the staffing of libraries. It is clear that user demand for research library services has risen considerably faster than numbers of both users and library staffs. During the 1990s, ARL library staffs and their primary customer groups of students have remained essentially constant. But in only five years, interlibrary borrowing for students and faculty has risen by more than a third, instructional sessions in libraries by a third, and circulations and information contacts by around 15 percent.

One could speculate that the increasing availability of information in new electronic formats allows libraries to be more efficient in meeting some of the information needs of students while also enhancing the ways in which libraries provide service. For example, online catalogs and new information tools such as CD-ROMs have made library resources more easily accessible to library users, consequently increasing circulation of materials and general demand for other library services.

Perhaps most interestingly, by 1995 one of every four instructional sessions in a typical ARL library had been added since 1991. The 108 university library members of ARL provided 68,000 teaching sessions during 1994-95. If we assume that each session was an hour or more, then, on the average, the typical ARL library offered the equivalent of 14 three-credit-hour courses last year.

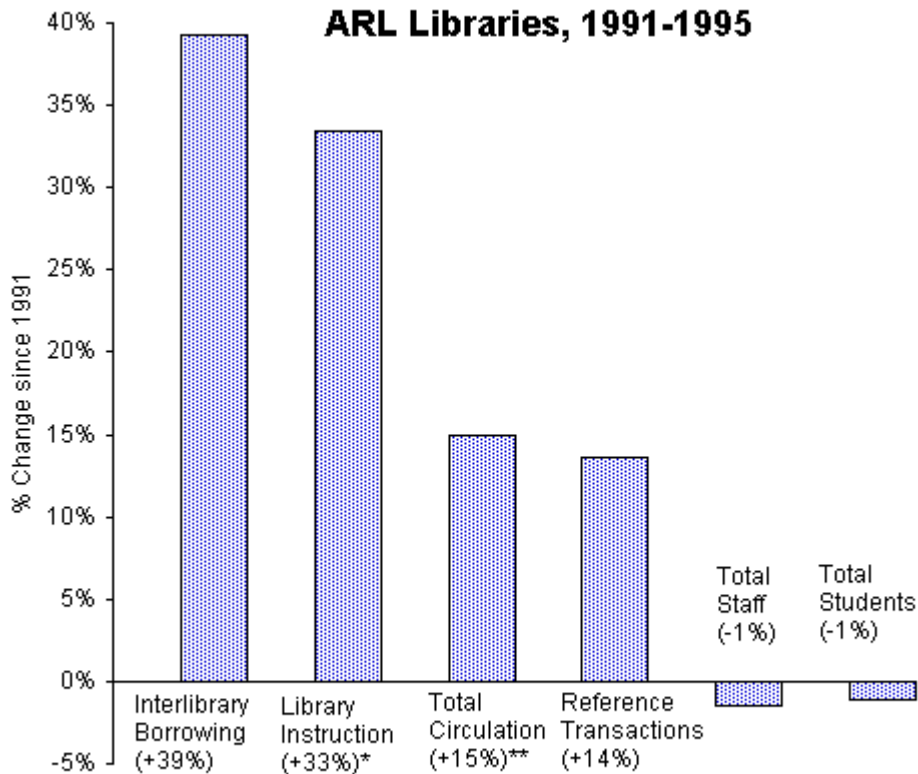
These increases in service activities were carried out by approximately the same number of staff as in 1991. In five years, library staff accommodated increases of 13,000 instructional sessions, almost 10 million additional circulations, and almost 2 million additional requests for information assistance from students and faculty. Clearly, restructuring and re-engineering of staff functions has been underway in ARL libraries to support increases of such magnitude in staff workloads.

Median Values for Time-Series Trends

| Year | Interlibrary | Library | Total | Reference | Total | Total |
|------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------|----------|
| | Borrowing | Instruction | Circulation | Transactions | Staff | Students |
| | | | | | | |

| (No. of Libraries) | (106) | (87) | (87) | (83) | (106) | (106) |
|-------------------------------|--------|------|---------|---------|-------|--------|
| 1991 | 10,342 | 512 | 501,128 | 131,441 | 271 | 18,290 |
| 1992 | 11,318 | 535 | 536,039 | 132,574 | 267 | 18,273 |
| 1993 | 12,486 | 620 | 559,383 | 139,044 | 263 | 18,450 |
| 1994 | 13,996 | 569 | 570,671 | 152,706 | 266 | 18,287 |
| 1995 | 14,403 | 683 | 575,731 | 149,326 | 267 | 18,089 |
| Annual average percent change | 8.6% | 7.5% | 3.5% | 3.2% | -0.4% | -0.3% |

Service Trends in ARL Libraries, 1991-1995



* Library Instruction represents the number of Group Presentations

** Total circulation includes Initial and Renewals but excludes Reserve circulation

ARL Statistics, 1994-95 was published in March and can be purchased from [ARL Publications](#).

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