

A. JUSTIFICATIONS FOR QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

The ALS questionnaire is being revised for the 2010 survey. One eligibility question and twelve item responses will be added and one item response will be dropped from the questionnaire. The revised questionnaire will require approximately 8 hour and 14 minutes to complete.

The revisions discussed below will appear in the 2010 ALS questionnaire and instructions.

1. Eligibility Question - New Question

Do your total library expenditures exceed \$10,000?

2. Item 507 -General circulation transactions - Change in Instructions

Change from “Report the number of items lent from the general collection. Include both initial transactions and renewals.” to “Report the number of items lent from the general collection (all formats). Include both initial transactions and renewals.”

3. Items 511 – 516 - Information services to individuals - New Questions

(See Appendix C for definitions of new items)

Item 511 – In Person Reference

Item 512 – Virtual Reference

Item 513 – Total Reference

Item 514 – In-Person Consultations

Item 515 – Virtual Consultations

Item 516 – Total Consultations

Academic libraries were very early adopters of virtual reference technology and services. Early adoption also meant early measurement of usage. (Additional information about Virtual Reference is available from ALA: **Virtual Reference: A Selected Annotated Bibliography, ALA Library Fact Sheet 19**

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/library/libraryfactsheet/alalibraryfactsheet19.cfm>)

The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) conducts three annual surveys of its membership (<http://www.arl.org/stats/annualsurveys/arlstats/arlstats08.shtml>):

- Base library statistics
- Emetrics as part of its StatsQual program: <http://www.arl.org/stats/initiatives/emetrics/index.shtml>
- Librarian salaries

In 2002, the ARL acted upon recommendations to collect emetrics from its member libraries, including:

- **(D2)** Use of digital collection
- **(U1)** # e-reference transactions
- **(U2)** # of logins (sessions) to e-databases
- **(U3)** # of queries in e-databases
- **(U4)** Items requested in e-databases
- **(U5)** # virtual visits
- **(P1)** % of e-reference of total reference

The emetrics definitions and rationales are detailed at:
http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/emetrics_module_3_statistics.ppt

The ALA Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) conducts an annual survey of academic libraries using the ARL survey instrument, but invites libraries identified in the NCES Academic Library Survey universe to respond:
(<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/publications/trends/index.cfm>)

Survey response rates: ARL achieves an annual response from 100% of academic library members (92% of total membership); ACRL achieved 53.8% response of the NCES ALS universe in its 2009 annual survey (2008 academic year).

Based on prior collection of emetric detail and the majority response rate by ARL members and 2-year, 4-year and university respondents to the ACRL survey, ARL and ACRL recommended to the NCES ALS TWG that the NCES survey disaggregate services to individuals currently reported as a sum of all reference transactions (Section 500, Library Services). Since libraries already provide a combined number comprised of the detail (in-person, virtual, and consultation), requesting they disaggregate those numbers did not increase burden for responding institutions.

Unlike in-person interactions which may be tabulated manually, virtual interactions are measured by the software and network utilities designed to support these interactions. Usage reports are easily generated by the software, increasing the validity of reporting (e.g., detail on date/time of virtual transaction, type of transaction (chat, IM, etc.), and duration of interaction).

It was further recommended that the phrase “Information Services to Individuals” should conform to the existing “Information Services to Groups” delineation in the ALS questionnaire.

4. Item 602 - Reference Transactions in a typical week - Change in location and duration

This question is now a yearly figure and is reported as item 517 (total information services to individuals).

5. Items 900-904 - Virtual reference – New Questions

See Appendix C for definitions of new questions.

Item 900

Does your library support virtual reference services? If no, select “N” and skip 901 thru 904.

If yes, does your library utilize any of the following and does it collect usage statistics form any of the virtual reference utilities?

Item 901 - E-mail Reference

Item 902 - Chat reference, commercial service (e.g. QuestionPoint, Tutor.com)

Item 903 - Chat reference, instant messaging application (e.g. Meebo)

Item 904 - Sort message service (SMS) or text messaging

ARL and ACRL also recommended to the NCES ALS TWG that the survey include information about the types of virtual reference utilities employed by academic libraries. Responses would validate virtual interactions reported in Section 5 by confirming if virtual reference services are provided and what types (e.g., chat, IM, etc.).

A series of low burden yes/no statements were developed to support the virtual reference service detail added in section 5. This information is required to establish the validity of responses in section 5, and to support Census development of edit tolerances. To establish the edit tolerances it must be known if the service is offered by the library, or if it is an item-level non-response that could be imputed.

Also, in 2010 the ALS will begin gathering detail on the types of utilities used to administer virtual reference services. Results from these questions will inform further refinement of library service questions, and establish trends in virtual service provision by academic libraries.

The majority response rates received by ARL and ACRL indicate that addition of these clarifying questions will add very little burden to NCES ALS respondents.