

Do Reviews Matter?

**An Analysis of Usage and Holdings of *Choice*-Reviewed Titles Within a
Consortium**

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Abstract

Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries has long been an important tool for librarians making collection development decisions. This study examines the holdings and usage for books reviewed in *Choice*, books designated by *Choice* as Outstanding Academic Titles, and the general collections of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries.

Introduction

Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries is an important tool used by many academic libraries to identify monographs to add to their collections. With over 7,000 reviews annually, it is the largest source of reviews of academic books.¹ Because it contains so many reviews, and because such a large number of librarians rely on it as a collection development tool, it is worthwhile to use it to investigate the worth of reviews, particularly good reviews, as predictors of eventual collection usage. There have been several studies of the usage of *Choice*-reviewed titles, but all of these have focused on a single institution and have generally looked at a fairly small sample of titles.

This study uses the Spectra Dimension collection analysis tool to examine very large sets of usage data from eight libraries in the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries (Alliance) over a seven-year period and compare those data to the books reviewed in *Choice* over that time as well as to the books designated by *Choice* as Outstanding Academic Titles (OAT). Three broad measures are examined: the degree of collection overlap within each category; the average annual use of titles in each category;

and the percentage of books within each category that are never used. Further analysis has been conducted at the call number range and by publication date.

Survey of the Literature

When Elizabeth Futas surveyed academic librarians, she found that most use reviews to guide selection decisions.² Asked to rank review media, sixty-one percent of responding libraries assigned the highest rank to *Choice*. Although this research suggests that reviews play an important role in the selection process, Virgil L. Blake theorized that reviews might play a less significant role in the collection development strategies of large academic libraries because of mass purchasing and approval plans.³ Many probably fall somewhere in the middle—using approval and purchase plans as the primary method of selecting materials supplemented by firm ordering based on reviews.

An informal survey of Colorado academic libraries shows that the smaller libraries with less substantial collections budgets are more likely than the larger libraries to make significant use of *Choice* for purchasing decisions, but that all make use of *Choice* reviews to some extent. In 2003 John M. Budd and Ellen R. Urton compared the purchases of university press monographs published in 1990 and in 2000, using *Choice* reviews to identify the titles which were then searched against library holdings reported in *WorldCat*.⁴ Although they had theorized that the median number of monographs purchased by libraries would decline for both *Choice* titles and *Choice* Outstanding Academic Titles, the decline in the median number of OAT titles acquired by libraries was not statistically significant. This suggests that reviews continue to be a significant factor in the selection decision for many libraries. Because many academic libraries make

a substantial investment in titles reviewed by *Choice*, use of these titles in comparison with collections as a whole is an important question.

One of the earliest attempts to establish a correlation between review evaluation and circulation was published by Herbert Goldhor, who compared circulation records from 1901 to 1957 for 317 adult non-fiction titles classed in Dewey Decimal numbers 612-613.9 which received three or more favorable reviews, one or two favorable reviews, or no favorable reviews.⁵ Although his study was limited to the Evansville (Indiana) Public Library and thus may not be as relevant to academic libraries, he concluded that well-reviewed and poorly-reviewed books are equally as likely to be read.

In 1983 John P. Schmitt and Stewart Saunders examined whether or not there was a correlation between the strength of the reviewer's recommendation and subsequent use of the same title in the Purdue University Libraries.⁶ They assigned a rank of one to five for each title with five representing works highly recommended for a broad audience and one representing titles which were not recommended for purchase. When the circulation records were examined, each title in the stratified cluster sample of 310 titles reviewed in *Choice* had been on the shelf from two to three and a half years. Somewhat to their surprise they found the titles to be "quite typical in their frequency of use" (Schmitt and Saunders, 1983, 377). While the titles, taken as a whole, had a circulation pattern typical to the collections in the humanities and social sciences as a whole, they found that titles which were highly recommended for undergraduate audiences (ranks four and five) circulated more frequently than those titles published for specialized audiences (ranks two and three). When they separated the titles by broad discipline, they found some correlation between positive reviews and circulation in the social sciences and no

correlation for titles in the humanities. The authors conclude that reviews could prove useful in identifying titles written for a broad audience that would be likely to be used at a higher rate than the collection as a whole.

In a follow up article, Saunders examined the relationship between quality as measured by *Choice* reviews and circulation of these materials over a ten-year period.⁷ His stated purpose was to find out if positive reviews had an impact on circulation as the collection aged. As in the earlier study co-authored with Schmitt, he found that the quality of the book had a very small relationship to circulation over time. Sadly he concludes that “although the decision to acquire titles of merit will not hurt circulation,” circulation figures cannot be used to justify an emphasis on quality within a collection (Saunders, 1996, 155).

In 1996 Scott Stebelman examined whether or not *Choice* was a good tool for collection assessment in an academic library. He compared George Washington University Library’s acquisition of titles against all titles that were reviewed in *Choice* between 1990 and 1994.⁸ When he examined circulation data he was surprised to find that, although humanities scholars are widely thought to be heavy users of monographs, *Choice* titles in the social sciences and sciences had higher circulation rates than those in the humanities. Because his study was limited to recent imprints and citation studies have demonstrated that scholars in the humanities make a higher use of older materials than other disciplines, he speculated that scholarly demand would rise as the materials aged. Conceding that *Choice* has limitations as a collection assessment tool because coverage is limited to undergraduate materials published in English and distributed in North America,

Stebelman nevertheless concluded that *Choice* remains “the best single source that an academic library can use in monitoring its acquisition program” (Stebelman, 1996, 10).

The question of whether or not *Choice* is a good predictor of circulation for electronic books has recently been researched by Karen Carter Williams and Rickey Best, who examined the circulation patterns for print and electronic books in the fields of Political Science, Public Administration, and Law using a sample of 323 titles (print and electronic or electronic only) available in the collections of Auburn University at Montgomery.⁹ They compared the larger set with a subset of titles cited in *Choice* as OAT. Although they discovered small differences in the average circulation for *Choice* and non-*Choice* titles by format, they found that print editions of titles were more likely to be used than their electronic counterparts. Like Schmitt, Saunders, and Goldhor, they found that *Choice* had no predictive value as measured by circulation or use (Williams and Best, 2006, 477).

Context

In 2006 the Shared Collection Development Committee of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries was asked by the deans and directors of libraries in the consortium to develop a shared purchase program which would “manage duplication of titles across the Alliance academic libraries, increase the total number of titles available, and maintain or improve overall collection quality....”¹⁰ A subcommittee developed a plan under which participating libraries agreed to develop a shared purchase plan for the acquisition of undergraduate materials in the areas of economics, mathematics, political science, and religion—areas of study collected by all of the libraries involved in the pilot. Because participating libraries have approval plans with either Blackwell’s Book Services or YBP

Library Services, the committee decided to establish purchase plans for two disciplines with Blackwell's and for two with YBP.¹¹

Participants

Eight libraries agreed to participate in one or more subject areas of the pilot project. Participants include the libraries of the University of Colorado at Denver (Auraria Library), Colorado College, Colorado State University, Regis University, the University of Colorado-Boulder, the University of Denver, the University of Northern Colorado, and the University of Wyoming. It should be noted that the Auraria Library, which is administered by the University of Colorado at Denver, also provides library services to the Community College of Denver and Metropolitan State College of Denver. Of the participants in the pilot, only Colorado College Library serves a wholly undergraduate population. All members supply their holdings to the Prospector Union Catalog administered by the Alliance. Although they are not members of the Alliance, many public and special libraries in Colorado and Wyoming also contribute their holdings to the catalog. Library users from any participating library are able to request loan of a title through Prospector when the title is unavailable in their home library. Deliveries to the requesting library are made by a courier system that includes Colorado and parts of Wyoming.

Datasets

In the formative stages of the pilot, the subcommittee sampled the collections of the participating libraries in order to estimate the degree of collection overlap. When circulation data were added to the sample, it appeared that member libraries were buying more copies of some titles than were needed. In order to craft purchase plans that would

acquire sufficient copies of an individual title to meet anticipated demand but not too many, the participating libraries recognized that they needed to make a more thorough analysis of circulation patterns in their respective libraries and across the Alliance. For the analysis, the committee selected the Spectra Dimension product from Library Dynamics. Spectra Dimension can be used to analyze holdings, usage data, and collection trends for both individual libraries and consortia.

The participating libraries extracted bibliographic and item records with circulation data for all titles published in the most recent seven years using technical specifications supplied by the company. Library Dynamics then combined the copy and circulation data for hardbound and paperback editions of the same title into one record. Thus the Spectra Dimension system allowed the participating libraries to examine collection overlap and usage across different types of libraries for all titles added to their collections in the most recent seven years. The system also allowed for calculation of annualized use by call number ranges and at the individual title level. Annualized use is defined by Library Dynamics as “total usage for all titles divided by the number of years that a title has been in the [library’s integrated] system”. Circulation data did not include renewals. It should be noted that participating libraries were unable to separate circulation to their primary clientele from that generated by the Prospector system which, as noted above, serves public and special libraries in the region in addition to academic libraries.

An important feature of Spectra Dimension is the inclusion of multiple comparative datasets. Those used in this study are the aggregate set of Alliance library titles, the complete list of titles reviewed in *Choice* between 1999 and 2005, and a subset

of titles designated as OAT by *Choice*. The undergraduate library set, consisting of the holdings of seven undergraduate libraries, will be used for a comparative analysis in a future portion of this research project.

Because Spectra Dimension allows users to “drill down” into ever narrower subclasses and to the individual title level, it allowed the selectors to make decisions about the number of copies to be purchased among the participating libraries with some degree of confidence. For the present study, however, the authors chose to examine usage at the Library of Congress (LC) broad classification level. The data used in this study differ from data examined in earlier studies in several important ways. Earlier studies relied on a sample of titles in a limited number of disciplines. This study includes 100 percent data for all non-reference titles added to their collections by participating libraries over the most recent seven years along with all of the associated circulation data. Unlike earlier studies referred to in the review of the literature, this study allowed for examination of usage across multiple libraries rather than in the collection of an individual library. Lastly, because the data span the most recent seven years, this study also has more longitudinal depth than some of the earlier work.

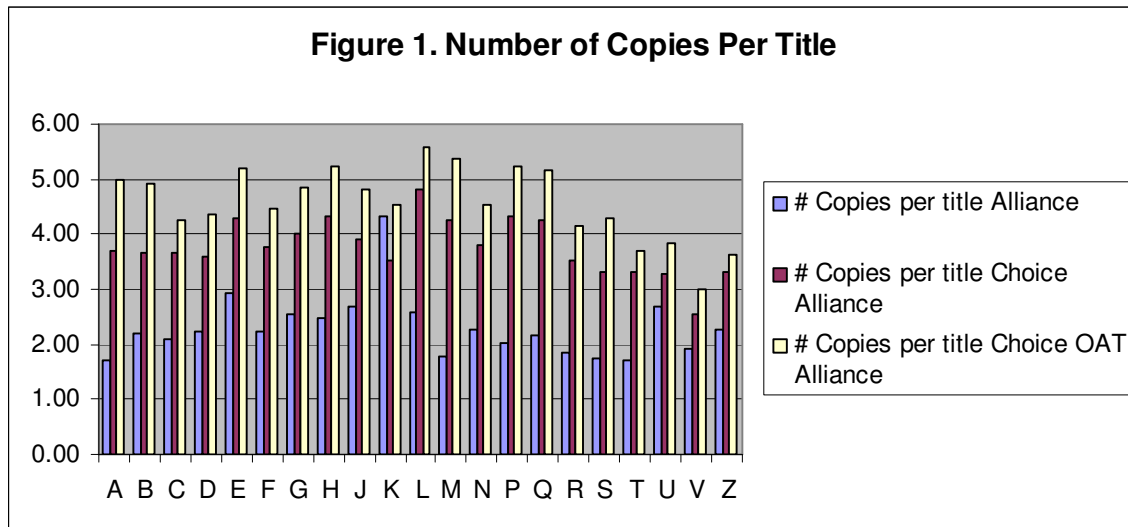
The Data

There are 421,882 books published between 1999 and early 2006 in the Alliance collections represented in Spectra Dimension. Of these, 40,528 (9.61 percent) were reviewed in *Choice* and 2,969 (0.70 percent) were designated by *Choice* as Outstanding Academic Titles. There were actually more books included in the OAT list for that time period, but the set included in Dimension contains only the OAT titles from 2002 to 2005. The Alliance collection contains 93.77 percent of the 43,221 titles reviewed by

Choice during this period and 97.95 percent of the 3,031 OAT. These percentages are relatively consistent across all call number ranges, with a low of 80.95 percent for books classified in the Library of Congress (LC) A's and a high of 96.41 percent for books in the J's (Political Science) for the *Choice* list as a whole and a low of 92.86 percent in the Z's (Bibliography, Library Science, Information Resources (General)) and several classes at 100.00 percent for the OAT books. See table 1 for a complete breakdown of holdings by LC class. It should be noted that the titles loaded into Dimension by the Alliance libraries do not include reference books while the *Choice* sets do. [Insert table 1]

The Alliance libraries as a group consistently buy more copies of books reviewed in *Choice* than they do books in general. Across all call number ranges, the Alliance libraries purchase 2.28 copies per title. This number increases to 4.01 for the subset of those titles that have been reviewed in *Choice* and to 4.88 for titles designated as outstanding. Though the numbers vary across call number ranges, the pattern is consistent across all ranges except K – Law. See figure 1 and table 2 for more detailed data on the number of copies across classes. It is not clear that this purchasing pattern is entirely due to the *Choice* reviews. Though some of the smaller libraries in the consortium make purchasing decisions based on *Choice* cards, the larger libraries tend not to, instead making use of approval plans. While no formal study of the overlap between publishers carried by major approval plans and publishers reviewed in *Choice* exists, a comparison of Stebelman's (1996, 10) data on publishers most frequently reviewed by *Choice* with the lists of publishers carried by Blackwell's and YBP reveals significant overlap. It may be that some of the titles from smaller presses reviewed by *Choice* may not be available through approval plans, but clearly, most titles are. And though selectors could get a

disproportionate number of requests to purchase these titles because they are reviewed in *Choice*, those requests could be based on reviews elsewhere. While *Choice* reviews could lead to greater purchasing, it is likely that other factors are involved as well.



LC Call No.	# of titles Alliance	% of Alliance as a whole	# of titles Choice Alliance	% of Choice Alliance as a whole	Choice titles as % of Call no.	# titles Choice (All)	% of Choice titles owned by Alliance	# titles Choice OAT (All)	% of OAT titles owned by Alliance	# titles Choice OAT Alliance	% of titles Choice OAT Alliance as a whole	OAT titles as % of Call no.
A	639	0.15%	34	0.08%	5.32%	42	80.95%	2	100.00%	2	0.07%	0.31%
B	25046	5.94%	3442	8.49%	13.74%	3733	92.20%	281	98.22%	276	9.30%	1.10%
C	2070	0.49%	230	0.57%	11.11%	256	89.84%	16	100.00%	16	0.54%	0.77%
D	22497	5.33%	3696	9.12%	16.43%	3891	94.99%	309	97.41%	301	10.14%	1.34%
E	9264	2.20%	2247	5.54%	24.26%	2345	95.82%	163	98.16%	160	5.39%	1.73%
F	6961	1.65%	1110	2.74%	15.95%	1177	94.31%	87	96.55%	84	2.83%	1.21%
G	16384	3.88%	1601	3.95%	9.77%	1716	93.30%	137	99.27%	136	4.58%	0.83%
H	61129	14.49%	6129	15.12%	10.03%	6417	95.51%	429	97.90%	420	14.15%	0.69%
J	10071	2.39%	2148	5.30%	21.33%	2228	96.41%	155	99.35%	154	5.19%	1.53%
K	18318	4.34%	847	2.09%	4.62%	906	93.49%	59	98.31%	58	1.95%	0.32%
L	16471	3.90%	1070	2.64%	6.50%	1116	95.88%	59	98.31%	58	1.95%	0.35%
M	13762	3.26%	1096	2.70%	7.96%	1164	94.16%	75	100.00%	75	2.53%	0.54%
N	15881	3.76%	2170	5.35%	13.66%	2381	91.14%	157	95.54%	150	5.05%	0.94%
P	85761	20.33%	6906	17.04%	8.05%	7400	93.32%	499	98.20%	490	16.50%	0.57%
Q	44084	10.45%	3936	9.71%	8.93%	4179	94.19%	331	97.58%	323	10.88%	0.73%
R	23492	5.57%	1223	3.02%	5.21%	1343	91.06%	78	100.00%	78	2.63%	0.33%
S	7854	1.86%	478	1.18%	6.09%	504	94.84%	38	94.74%	36	1.21%	0.46%

T	34450	8.17%	1395	3.44%	4.05%	1573	88.68%	100	98.00%	98	3.30%	0.28%
U	3106	0.74%	329	0.81%	10.59%	347	94.81%	24	100.00%	24	0.81%	0.77%
V	674	0.16%	59	0.15%	8.75%	69	85.51%	4	100.00%	4	0.13%	0.59%
Z	3968	0.94%	382	0.94%	9.63%	434	88.02%	28	92.86%	26	0.88%	0.66%
Totals	421882		40528			43221	93.77%	3031	97.95%	2969		

Table 1: Overview of collections, by call number

LC Call No.	# Copies per title Alliance	# Copies per title Choice Alliance	# Copies per title Choice OAT Alliance
A	1.72	3.71	5.00
B	2.21	3.67	4.91
C	2.10	3.67	4.25
D	2.24	3.59	4.36
E	2.94	4.29	5.19
F	2.22	3.78	4.45
G	2.56	4.01	4.85
H	2.49	4.31	5.22
J	2.67	3.91	4.83
K	4.33	3.52	4.55
L	2.60	4.83	5.59
M	1.79	4.27	5.37
N	2.27	3.80	4.53
P	2.01	4.32	5.22
Q	2.18	4.26	5.17
R	1.84	3.54	4.17
S	1.76	3.32	4.28
T	1.71	3.30	3.68
U	2.67	3.28	3.83
V	1.91	2.54	3.00
Z	2.28	3.31	3.62
Totals	2.28	4.01	4.88

Table 2: Copies per title

Usage of *Choice* books has been measured in two ways. Annualized use per title is a measure of the number of times each book has been used each year and takes into account the fact that the same title could be cataloged in different years by different libraries. This figure is then averaged across the call number range. For the Alliance libraries as a whole, usage per title goes up slightly from 0.46 per year for the collection

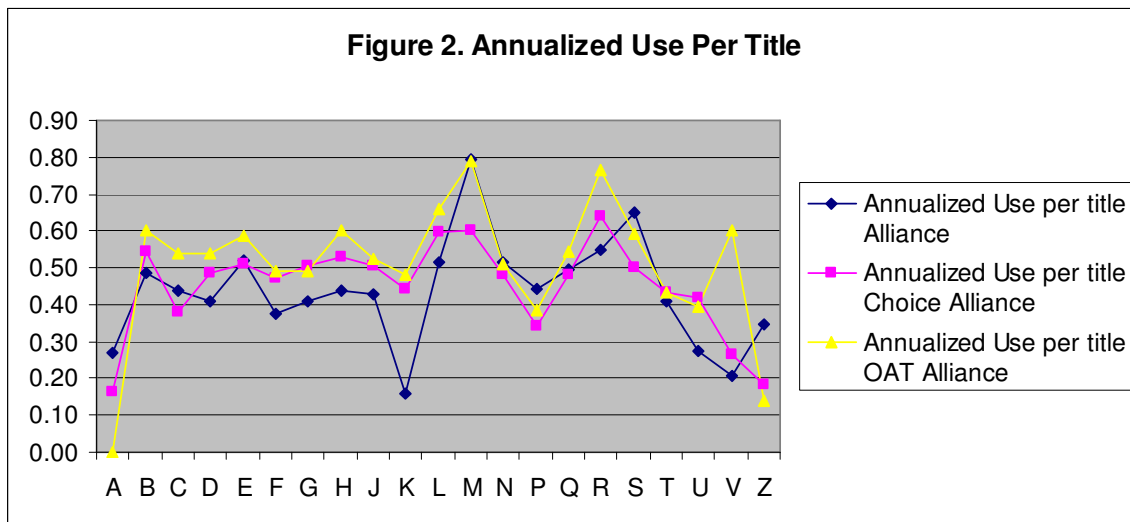
as a whole to 0.48 for the *Choice* titles and 0.53 for the OAT titles. Though the difference in circulation rate between all Alliance titles and *Choice* titles is not significant, a Wilcoxon sign-rank test shows that the OAT titles do circulate at a significantly higher rate than Alliance titles (Ho: Use(Alliance) = Use(OAT); $z = -2.041$; Prob > |z| = 0.04).

This pattern of greater use for *Choice* titles and even greater use for OAT books is not consistent across time. For books published in 2005, although usage is lower than the norm for the entire collection for Alliance and *Choice* titles, the pattern holds. In the same year, annualized use per title is higher than the norm for the OAT titles, but with only a partial set of OAT data. For 2002-2004 publication dates, the trend of greater use for *Choice* and OAT books remains consistent. Interestingly, for earlier publication dates, the pattern changes, with greater use for Alliance titles as a whole than for the *Choice* titles. See table 3 for more detail. Though more study is needed, it is likely that usage for *Choice*, OAT, and the collection as a whole evens out over time. There appears to be a spike in usage for books reviewed in *Choice* in the first few years after publication that may not hold up over time. This seems to be consistent with Saunders' findings.

Pub date	Annualized Use Alliance	Annualized Use Choice Alliance	Annualized Use OAT Alliance	# of titles Alliance	# of titles Choice Alliance	# titles Choice (All)	# titles Choice OAT (All)	# titles Choice OAT Alliance	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice OAT Alliance
1999	30002.95	2328.91	4.49	68788	5604	6279			0.44	0.42	
2000	32713.37	2675.35	165.34	68442	6171	6697	372	364	0.48	0.43	0.45
2001	29873.73	2669.23	259.93	60292	5839	6259	563	559	0.50	0.46	0.46
2002	30667.58	2927.46	330.70	64511	6015	6413	620	615	0.48	0.49	0.54
2003	31587.96	3267.38	338.30	63518	6368	6792	586	579	0.50	0.51	0.58
2004	31735.35	3456.98	354.42	56743	5950	6377	627	614	0.56	0.58	0.58
2005	20178.45	2112.52	134.03	50227	4541	4937	252	247	0.40	0.47	0.54

Table 3: Data by publication date. Note that OAT data for 2000 and 2005 are incomplete.

There is some variation of annualized usage per title across call number ranges. In eight cases (out of 21) Alliance titles are used more than one or both categories of *Choice* titles. And in five cases, *Choice* titles are used the same or more than OAT books. See figure 2 and table 4 for a detailed overview of usage by call number. These differences may be due to the number of books reviewed in those areas or could be an indication that some disciplines place a greater weight in the sorts of books reviewed in *Choice* than do others.



LC Call No.	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title OAT Alliance
A	0.27	0.17	0.00
B	0.49	0.55	0.60
C	0.44	0.38	0.54
D	0.41	0.49	0.54
E	0.52	0.51	0.59
F	0.38	0.47	0.49
G	0.41	0.51	0.49
H	0.44	0.53	0.60
J	0.43	0.51	0.53
K	0.16	0.44	0.48

L	0.52	0.60	0.66
M	0.79	0.60	0.79
N	0.51	0.48	0.51
P	0.44	0.34	0.39
Q	0.49	0.48	0.55
R	0.55	0.64	0.77
S	0.65	0.50	0.59
T	0.41	0.43	0.43
U	0.27	0.42	0.39
V	0.21	0.27	0.60
Z	0.35	0.19	0.14
Totals	0.46	0.48	0.53

Table 4: Annualized use per title

An analysis by broad disciplinary breakdown shows that for the humanities, there is generally greater use for the non-*Choice* and non-OAT titles than there is for the titles that have been reviewed. The humanities collections as a whole are used 0.49 times on average per title annually, while the *Choice* titles show a usage rate of 0.40 and the OAT titles have a rate of 0.45. See table 5 for a breakdown of the humanities disciplines by LC class. For the social sciences (see table 6), the pattern of greater use for *Choice* titles (0.52) and even greater use for OAT titles (0.56) holds, and in fact, the difference between usage of the general collections (0.40) and books reviewed in *Choice* is greater than for the collections as a whole or for any other discipline. The patterns for the humanities and social sciences echo the results of the Schmitt and Saunders and Stebelmen studies. History, a discipline which straddles the humanities and social sciences, has been looked at as a separate category (see table 7). Usage patterns seem to lie closer to the social sciences than to the humanities, with a rate of 0.43 for the history collections as a whole, 0.49 for the *Choice* titles, and 0.55 for the OAT titles. Finally, the science and technology disciplines (see table 8) are closest to the pattern for the collections as a whole, with annual usage of 0.43 for the general science and technology books, 0.49 for the titles reviewed in *Choice*, and 0.55 for those designated as OAT. In

considering these disciplines, some call number ranges have been left out. A – General Works and Z, which tend to contain works from a range of disciplines, were not included. Nor was B – Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, which includes separate areas within the humanities and social sciences.

LC Call No.	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title OAT Alliance
M	0.79	0.60	0.79
N	0.51	0.48	0.51
P	0.44	0.34	0.39
Totals	0.49	0.40	0.45
# Titles	115404	10172	715

Table 5: Humanities

LC Call No.	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title OAT Alliance
G	0.41	0.51	0.49
H	0.44	0.53	0.60
J	0.43	0.51	0.53
K	0.16	0.44	0.48
L	0.52	0.60	0.66
U	0.27	0.42	0.39
V	0.21	0.27	0.60
Totals	0.40	0.52	0.56
# Titles	126153	12183	854

Table 6: Social sciences

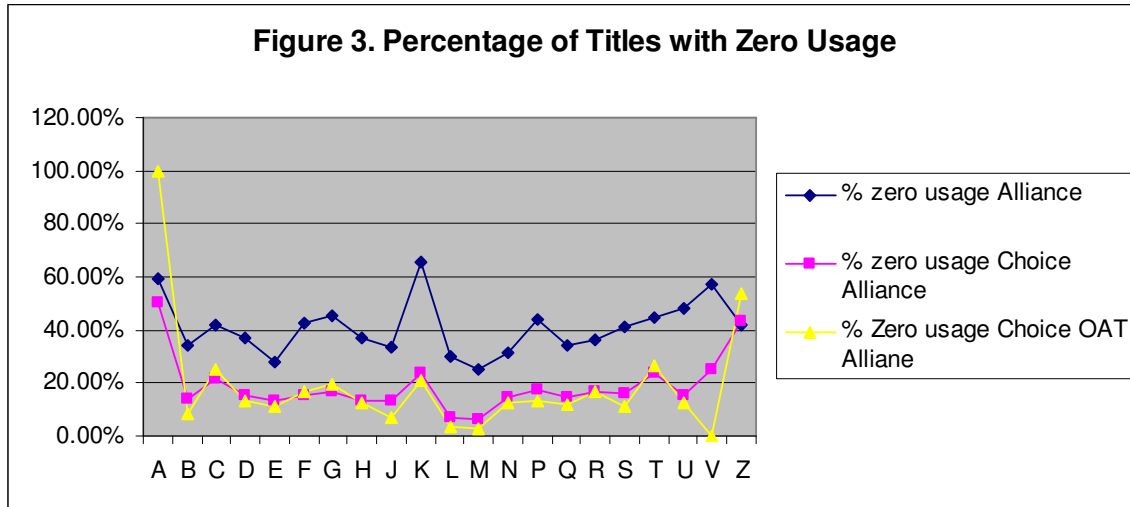
LC Call No.	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title OAT Alliance
C	0.44	0.38	0.54
D	0.41	0.49	0.54
E	0.52	0.51	0.59
F	0.38	0.47	0.49
Totals	0.43	0.49	0.55
# Titles	40792	7283	561

Table 7: History

LC Call No.	Annualized Use per title Alliance	Annualized Use per title Choice Alliance	Annualized Use per title OAT Alliance
Q	0.49	0.48	0.55
R	0.55	0.64	0.77
S	0.65	0.50	0.59
T	0.41	0.43	0.43
Totals	0.49	0.50	0.56
# Titles	109880	7032	535

Table 8: Science and technology

A second measure of usage is the percent of zero usage, or the percentage of books in a call number range that have never been used. Here, there is a significant difference between *Choice* and non-*Choice* titles. Across the Alliance libraries as a whole, 39.90 percent of books are never used. This compares to 15.42 percent of the *Choice* titles and 13.20 percent of the OAT books. In only two cases (A and Z) – call number ranges that often behave differently than the norm) are Alliance books less likely never to be used than *Choice* or OAT books. And in only six are OAT books less likely not to be used than *Choice* titles. See figure 3 and table 9 for a detailed breakdown by LC class. This seems to be the most significant finding. Though *Choice* and OAT titles will not necessarily be used at a higher rate than books in general, it is extremely likely that they will be used.



LC Call No.	% zero usage Alliance	% zero usage Choice Alliance	% Zero usage Choice OAT Alliane
A	59.15%	50.00%	100.00%
B	34.21%	14.18%	8.70%
C	42.03%	21.74%	25.00%
D	36.82%	15.50%	13.60%
E	27.70%	12.91%	11.25%
F	42.61%	15.32%	16.67%
G	45.59%	17.05%	19.85%
H	37.15%	13.10%	12.38%
J	33.77%	13.13%	7.14%
K	65.52%	23.49%	20.69%
L	30.20%	6.92%	3.45%
M	25.12%	6.02%	2.67%
N	31.44%	14.84%	12.67%
P	43.85%	17.52%	13.27%
Q	34.01%	14.86%	12.07%
R	36.09%	16.76%	16.67%
S	40.88%	16.11%	11.11%
T	44.47%	23.94%	26.53%
U	48.13%	15.20%	12.50%
V	56.97%	25.42%	0.00%
Z	42.14%	43.46%	53.85%
Totals	39.30%	15.42%	13.20%

Table 9: Percentage of titles with zero usage

Conclusions

Choice reviews have long been an important source of information for academic librarians making collection development decisions. A review in *Choice*, particularly a designation as an Outstanding Academic Title, makes libraries in the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries more likely to purchase a book. Though there are a greater number of copies per title of these books, there is a very slight corresponding increase in usage for books reviewed in *Choice*. There is, however, a significant increase in usage, from 0.46 to 0.53 times per year, for books designated as OAT. These patterns do not hold across all disciplines; for books in the humanities, neither a *Choice* review nor an OAT designation brings a corresponding increase in usage. The increase in usage seems most pronounced for books in the social sciences, but is true for other non-humanities disciplines as well.

Another significant finding is that books reviewed in *Choice* are much more likely to be used than non-*Choice* titles. Though their ultimate level of usage may be the same, a review in *Choice* correlates to a much higher possibility of at least a single use. For the entire set of books examined, almost 40 percent have never been used – in comparison with 15.42 percent for *Choice* titles and a slightly better 13.20 percent for OAT titles. It is not clear that the *Choice* review or OAT designation is the cause of the greater likelihood of a title being used, but it is obvious that these books will almost always be used at least once.

The benefits that *Choice* and OAT titles have in terms of better usage under both measures seem to disappear over time. Though the usage figures by publication date are incomplete for the OAT titles and only show aggregate usage for the books, it does

appear that as books age the usage levels for all three groups of titles decreases but at a greater rate for the *Choice* and OAT titles.

Because books reviewed in *Choice* have a slightly higher usage rate than the collection in general, and books designated as OAT have a significantly higher usage rate; and because any book reviewed in *Choice* is much more likely to be used at least once, it seems that academic libraries should continue to use *Choice* as a selection tool. However, since there are important differences across disciplines, this may not be the case for all subject areas. Later phases of this project will examine in more depth some of the disciplinary differences, some of the changes that occur with usage over time, and whether the usage patterns that have been revealed are true for other types of academic libraries.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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