NCES Academic Library Survey Minutes
Advisory Committee Meeting, Washington, DC

Meeting: Friday, June 25, 2010  8:30am – 11:34am
Washington Convention Center Room 304
801 Mount Vernon Place NW, Washington, DC

Advisory committee members: Denise Davis (chair), Tai Phan (NCES, survey manager), Terri Fishel (Oberlin Group), Laura Hardesty (Census), Jamie Hug (Census), Bill Miller (ACRL), Kenley Neufeld (2-year schools), Mary Jane Petrowski (ACRL), Pat Profeta (college), Rita Pellen (university), Gary Roebuck (ARL), Norman Rose (ALA-ORS), Cindy Sheckells (Census).

Guests: Jill O’Brien (Census), Jeffrey Owings (Associate Commissioner, NCES), Kim Miller (IMLS); Susan Campbell (College Center for Library Automation, FL), Dell Davis (University of the Incarnate Word, TX), Sharon Swacker (NYC College of Technology, CUNY), Dean Bryan (CUNY).

1. Preliminaries
   a. Introductions and logistics (breaks, other)
   b. Minutes from the January 2010 meeting in Boston were approved with corrections.
   c. Agenda reviewed and approved with one addition to the Census update.

Information Items

2. NCES update (Jeff Owings, Tai Phan)
   a. Library Statistics Program (Tai Phan)
      1. OMB clearance for the 2010 ALS was reviewed without comments. The 2010 ALS preliminary data are expected to release to the Compare Tool in June 2010, and the final report (First Look) and final data should release in winter 2012. Changes to the functionality of the ALS Compare Tool will align with the final data release (winter 2012);
   b. Jeffrey Owings updated the group on overall NCES activities, mentioning that respondent privacy requirements are impacting longitudinal and other studies at the Center. ALS advisory group members asked about the status of moving the ALS to an annual survey. Jeff noted that could not be acted upon until a new Commissioner was appointed. Someone has been recommended, but the vetting process is still underway. Once that appointment is confirmed by the Senate, it would be possible to approach NCES with a justification for modifying the ALS survey cycle. A caution was that if data don’t change much from survey to survey, asking for more frequent surveys may cause an opposite effect than intended. It was decided that the ALS advisory committee would work on this, as appropriate, between now and its January 2011 meeting in San Diego.

3. Census update (Laura Hardesty, Cindy Sheckells)
a. Laura Hardesty reviewed the Census update for the 2010 survey (handout provided), including the survey Calendar, FAQ development, and survey instrument.

b. Status of email reconciliation (ACRL/Census) – Mary Jane Petrowski will send Census the most current email file ACRL has from its survey. Kenley Neufeld and others will send email lists to Laura Hardesty to update contact information for reporting institutions.

c. Survey design (randomize question sections, etc.), screen shots, FAQ, etc. – it was recommended that examples be removed from questions and appear only in the instructions. This affects items 702, 902, and 903. Typo in item 904 – “Short message services (SMS)” not “sort”.

d. New data element, table design discussion - It was noted by Bill Miller that there may be some redundancy in the 2010 survey resulting from the new detailed reporting of reference transactions. Items 701, 512 and 900/901 will be reviewed.

e. Question from field – impacts section 300-307.
   Has there been any consideration for more detailed explanations of the information requested on the survey? I find the comparisons only marginally useful, and I suspect it is because libraries are answering the questions differently. For example, the question about books:
   Expenditures: Books, Serial Backfiles, Other Materials
   I'd really like to know what other academic libraries are spending on print books, especially as compared to their previous years' spending, and if they are moving some of those funds to ebooks. But the ebooks would be included in this statistic according to the definition, and also included elsewhere, in electronic materials. It just doesn't get granular enough to be of use. I also have to wonder if there are lots of errors in how amounts are calculated. We ran into this in 2008, because the last person who reported for Fairbanks left no information about how she had pulled her figures. Our collection size looks substantially smaller now than it did then, simply because we don't know what system reports were previously used, and we used the ones we knew about.

Do we need detail on expenditure by material type?
Action – For the 2012 survey - In section 300, One-time purchases of books, serial backfiles and other materials add a line for expenditures for print books. This section will read
One-time purchases of books, serial backfiles and other materials
301   Print books
302   Electronic
303   Audiovisual

Renumber the remainder of section 300.

Action: For the 2012 survey modify instructions in section 400 (Collections) to include “access rights” and clarify that this may also include cataloging. This change impacts:
E-Books (401) – Report the number of electronic monographs for which your library has access rights, and/or that have been cataloged by your library and are accessible through the library’s catalog.
Action: Information Literacy questions (800-804) need rewording. Mary Jane Petrowski (ACRL) will send recommendations to the advisory group for review/approval.

4. Updates, other surveys and projects that do or could have an impact on NCES/ALS
   a. ACRL (Bill Miller) – ACRL released a longitudinal data analysis tool, developed by Counting Opinions [http://www.acrlmetrics.com]. Until the NCES ALS moves to an annual reporting cycle, ACRL will continue its annual survey. An ACRL taskforce surveyed library directors regarding benchmarks and in those results were comments about their use of NCES resources (document shared with advisory committee).
   Action - ACRL asked if Census would send the “not eligible” institutions from the 2008 ALS.
   Action - ACRL will test revised NCES ALS literacy questions on its 2010 survey and share results in June 2011 or before.
   b. ARL (Gary Roebuck) – prepared update sent in advance of the meeting. Bill Miller asked about ClimateQual, hosted at the University of Maryland College Park. Gary reported that this project has moved beyond its pilot phase, data are not shared among participating libraries and Survey Monkey is used to collect data. It is expected that ARL will take over administration of ClimateQual in the next few years.
   c. Oberlin Group (Terri Fishel) – streamlining the Oberlin Group survey and decisions on changes will be made it their October 2010 meeting. Terri will report on changes at the ALS meeting in January 2011.
   d. IMLS (Kim Miller) – various update materials were provided, including preliminary findings from the FY2008 public library data (*final data and report released to the IMLS website on June 30, 2010). [get update document from Kim to add online]
   e. ALA (Denise Davis) – Demonstration of online publication, 2009-2010 Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study, released as a digital supplement to the American Libraries magazine (http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/archives/digital-supplement/summer-2010-digital-supplement)
   f. Tai Phan demonstrated NCES the School District Demographics System http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/index.aspx), a geo-mapping tool, and the College Navigator (http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/). The Data Tools portal is updated regularly, and data applications will be located in this portal in the future (http://nces.ed.gov/datatools/).

5. 1998-2008 data analysis and trends - preliminary analysis issues were presented by Norman Rose. Feedback from the advisory group is needed to identify the key characteristics for longitudinal analysis and table generation. Norman will send the list of common characteristics (for all years of analysis) to the group for consideration. Tables will be developed and sent to the group for review and comment. The goal is to have the tables and narrative completed in fall 2010.
   Action – ACRL will share variables used in its “value” project to inform the group as they determine core characteristics for analysis.
   Action – Item-level response bias may be an issue; NCES requires 80% item-level response.
Action – NCES will expand the historic data files available in the ALS Compare Tool (pre-2000).

HANDOUTS EMAILED WITH AGENDA
- MW Minutes, January 2010 (Boston)
- Committee Roster
- 2010 questionnaire, instructions, changes
- ALA-ORS update
- ACRL update
- ARL update
- Travel reimbursement form

HANDOUTS/REPORTS AT MEETING
- Census handout(s) - additional
- IMLS handout(s) – Library Research Update, Press releases, Public Libraries Survey FY2008 pre-release findings, program analyst vacancy announcement
- ACRL Task Force Survey comments regarding NCES resources usage