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Ralph W. Steen Library 2015 – 2016 Quantitative Comparative Statistical Analysis

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Ralph W. Steen Library 2015 – 2016 Quantitative Comparative Statistical Analysis

Abstract: For academic libraries at public state universities, the challenge continues on how to evaluate performance, measure progress, and find meaningful ways to demonstrate their worth. The challenge is to find meaningful ways to demonstrate how library programs and services contribute to learning outcomes and student success. This report presents a comparative analysis of Ralph W. Steen Library and ten peer institutions to highlight areas of excellence and under-performance that may warrant further attention.

Increased accountability, transparency and the goal to pursue excellence are driving higher educational institutions to evaluate performance and to measure progress. For academic libraries at public state universities, the challenge is to find meaningful ways to demonstrate how programs and services contribute to learning outcomes and student success.

Typically, libraries have measured their worth through statistics using a series of metrics to measure volumes in collections, expenditure, staff size, physical space and other characteristics. Qualitative assessments contextualize services and resources to demonstrate the effectiveness of the library in advancing research for faculty and students. Today, a strategic planning process, with measurable goals and objectives, is part of most library performance reviews.

This type of assessment can come about through peer comparison and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has identified a peer list of “comprehensive” institutions such as Stephen F Austin State University (SFA). Academic goals that are held in common among these institutions are to offer baccalaureate programs, doctoral education in a few disciplines (often with national recognition), workforce skills, and to prepare students for graduate and professional school. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Accountability System assigns sub-categories within peer institutions they are presented below.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Sub-categories

Figure 1

Texas Comprehensive Group for peers	Out-of-State Comprehensive Group for peers
<i>Lamar University</i> <i>Stephen F. Austin State University</i> <i>Prairie View A&M University</i> <i>Tarleton State University</i> <i>West Texas A&M University</i> <i>Texas A&M University</i>	<i>Arkansas State University – Main Campus</i> <i>University of Central Missouri</i> <i>Appalachian State University</i>
SFA’s Out-of-State peers	
<i>Eastern Kentucky University</i> <i>Florida Gulf Coast University</i>	

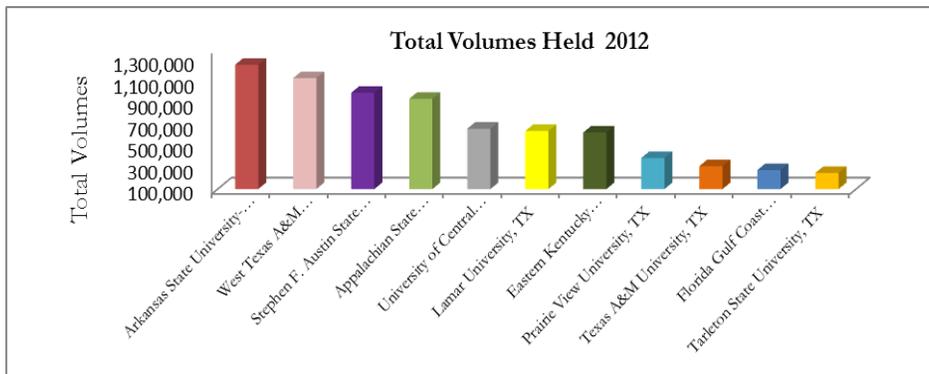
Statistics of the libraries of the ten institutions and that of Steen Library at SFA were gathered through the IPEDS Academic Libraries Survey (ALS) and can be found at

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/Compare/Default.aspx> . Benchmarks for comparison help highlight areas of excellence and under-performance that may require further attention.

When looking at standard metrics like volumes held in a library from 2012, the most current at the time of this report, it is apparent that Steen Library is closer in proximity with peer institutions that have much larger student populations. Stephen F Austin State University is a small to mid-size institution, and the nearly one million volumes held are indicative of the nature of its many collections and the community it serves. The East Texas Research Center (ETRC) at Steen Library offers access to resources related to the history of the region many of which are in print form.

Total Volumes Held 2012

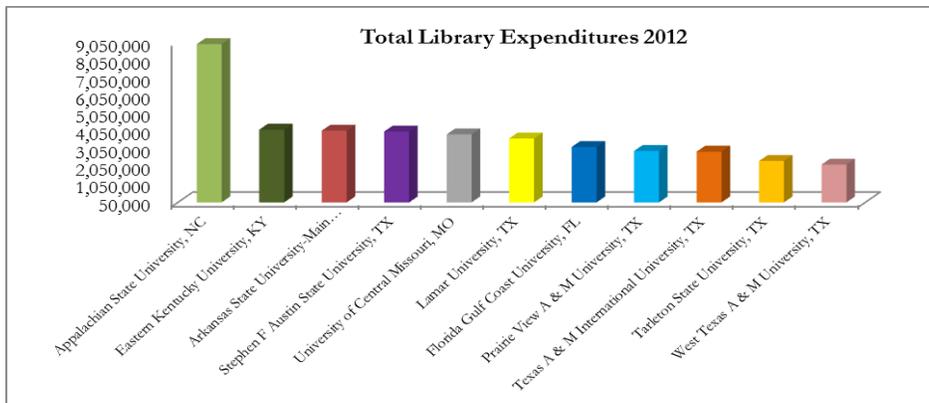
Figure 2



Total library expenditures in 2012 for Steen Library are higher than most other members of the peer group. Eastern Kentucky and Arkansas State both have slightly higher total library expenditures than Steen Library, while Appalachian State University has the highest expenditure in peer institutions for the last reported ALS period.

Total Library Expenditures 2012

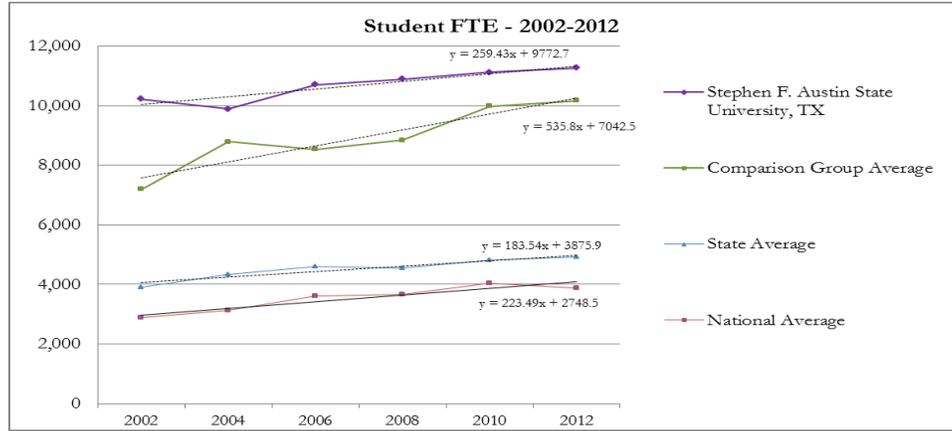
Figure 3



To understand the factors that contribute to such differences it may be useful to take a look at Steen Library in a comparative context and track changes among the 10 peer institutions.

Student FTE 2002-2012

Figure 4

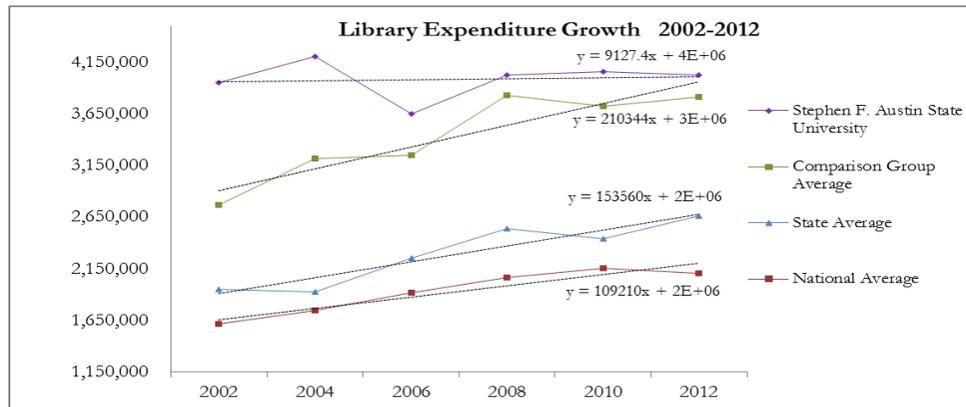


Enrollment at Stephen F. Austin State University is steady and growing, even though the pace is slower than peer institutions. For the period of time represented in this graph, SFA on average has seen an increase in annual enrollment by 259 students higher than state and national averages. However, peer institutions on average have seen an annual increase by 535 students, a much greater rate of increase.

*During the past four years, enrollment at SFA reached a high of 12,999 in the fall of 2012, but has since declined to 12,606 in the fall of 2015.

Library Expenditure Growth 2002-2012

Figure 5

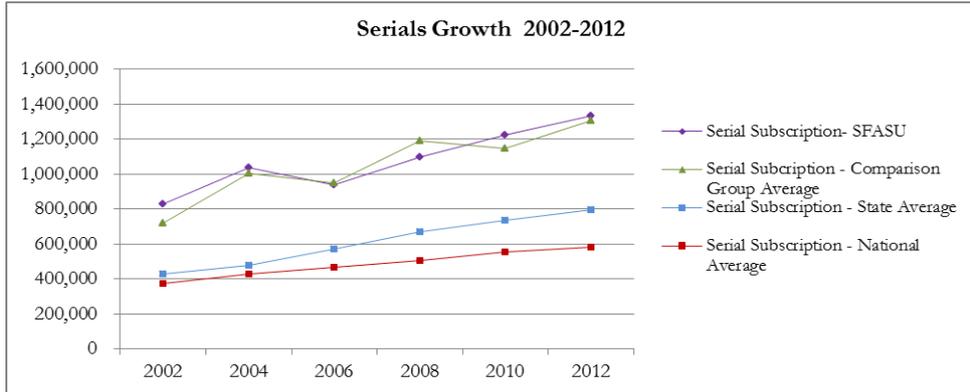


The expenditures for Steen Library are larger on average, than the mean expenditures of the peer libraries. However, while Steen Library had a much higher level of expenditures than its peers in 2002, the budget has remained stagnant, showing little to no growth over the past 10 years. Peers

show significant growth in their mean expenditures over the same time period. The state average continues to rise even though the national level shows a decline. This is an area that Steen Library may need to look at if it wants to continue to effectively meet the needs of its constituents, and keep abreast with changes over time.

Serials Growth 2002-2012

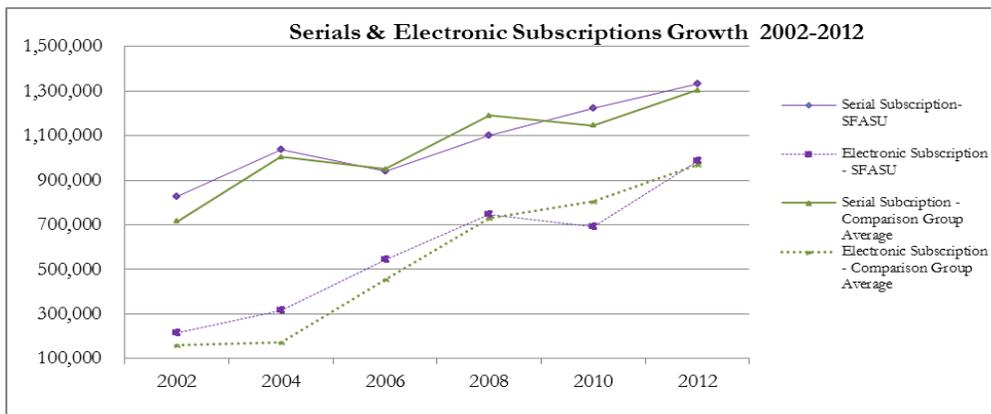
Figure 6



Note: Serials growth at Steen Library and its peers is comparable but Steen Library spends an average of \$30,000 more than the mean for peer institutions. On average, this is \$40K higher than state and national median.

Serials & Electronic Subscriptions Growth 2002-2012

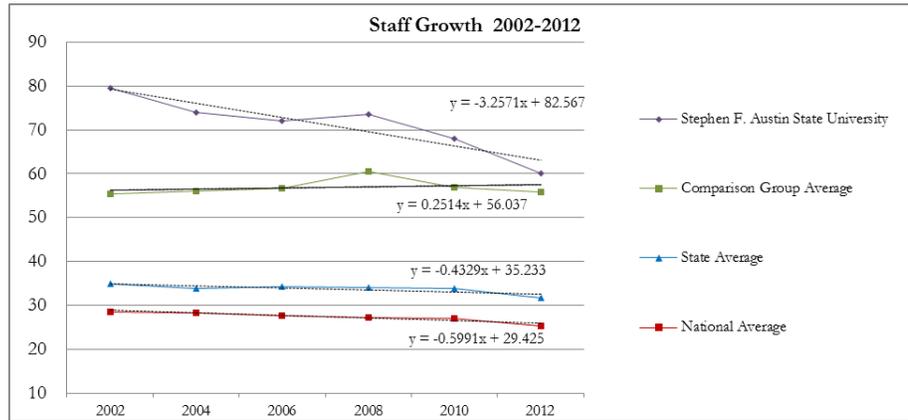
Figure 7



Note: Serials & electronic subscriptions continue to require a large portion of the materials budget, with a continuing shift towards electronic serials. Steen Library is presently in the midst of a major de-selection process of print books and journals. This is seen as a means to improve and make the collections more robust and meaningful to the end-user. Reducing print materials and transitioning more materials to an electronic format will allow Steen Library to alleviate some of the budget constraints to reduce the gap between cost and expenditure.

Staff Growth 2002-2012

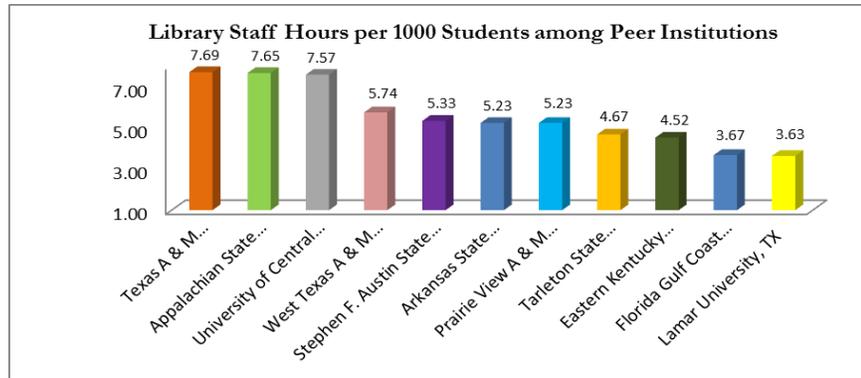
Figure 8



Note: Staff levels have declined over the past ten years at Steen Library, primarily due to a decrease in the number of student assistants. Increases in student wages over the years and a stagnant budget have led to this decrease. This area may require improvement and greater focus as student positions offer opportunity for growth and add value to the library. Both state and national averages also show librarian positions are being eliminated.

Library Staff Hours per 1000 Student among Peer Institutions

Figure 9



Note: In terms of number of hours of staff time spent on average annually per student (library staff FTE/student) Steen Library is above peer average or median. State and national averages are much lower.

Steen Library faces challenges in terms of statistical comparisons but it has several options for amendments. Improving statistical characteristics will be important for Steen Library as it continues to support the university’s mission of teaching, research, and scholarship.

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