

Assessment Annual Report

Service or Collection: Borrowing @ Valley Library: General Collection

Fiscal Year

FY24 (July 2023 – June 2024)

Overview

Although declining for many years, borrowing the general physical collections at Valley Library still is an important way for library users to access information (Figure 1). In fall of 2020 (FY21), OSULP eliminated overdue fines for all OSU owned material. The only items still charged with an overdue fine are things borrowed from other libraries.

Over FY24 in-person campus life has continued to reestablish itself with over 900,000 visitors to Valley Library. This is about 80% of pre-pandemic levels (Figure 2). However, the use of the physical general collection lags at 61% less than in the last full FY (FY19) before the pandemic. The trend towards electronic access of library collections may have been accelerated by behavior learned during the pandemic. There is no doubt that this trend is not exclusive to OSU. The most recent ACRL State of Academic Libraries Report found that only 1.6% of reported academic library circulation is physical.

Strategic Significance:

The library has understandably devoted most of its resources and focus to increasing digital access to information, however, the general collection's physical material continues to play a significant role in preserving and disseminating knowledge. Since many things are unavailable in any format other than print, it requires minimal energy for long term storage and is more accessible than digital for some users this continued investment in circulating, preserving, and purchasing print materials makes strategic sense. The library's acquisition of print material since the pandemic has mostly been either at the request of a user or for a specifically identified need by library staff like book displays or course reserves.

In contrast, the Valley Library's Library of Things continues to grow in use and size. The details of this collection are available in the Library of Things Assessment Report.

Takeaways:

- Although Valley library has been increasing physical circulation of the general collection since a significant decline during COVID, it is still well below pre-COVID numbers (Figure 1). This reflects a longstanding decline in physical circulation that most academic libraries have experienced for some time. Learning habits brought on by COVID isolation and the continued rise of remote students mostly from Ecampus are likely at least partial explanations. This may also be evidence of the success of several opportunities identified in the OSULP Strategic Plan that focus on creating and acquiring digitized collections.
- After an increase in lost items as a percentage of loans over and shortly after the pandemic, this metric has returned to pre-COVID numbers and even shows signs of dropping lower (Figure 3). Eliminating fines does not at least with items in the general collection seem to have impacted loans eventually being returned.

Key Decisions:

Two key decisions that continue to impact physical circulation of the Valley Library general collection are the elimination of fines on OSU-owned items and the strategic focus on transferring and collecting digital collections; neither happened in FY24. However, they do continue to be important considerations when deciding how to evaluate the circulation or the physical collection and its importance.

No major changes were made in FY24 that impacted general collection borrowing.

Next Steps:

We are at a point where we have enough data to be able to start teasing out the effects of eliminating fines from the effects of COVID when it comes to the circulation of the general collection. However, there are no plans to do so now. The effect on individual users, particularly students no longer penalized for most late returns, is undoubtedly positive. Although the evidence is anecdotal, this change has also improved the quality of interactions between staff and users, allowing us to focus on supporting student success and belonging. It is recommended that promoting the libraries' fine-free policies, and the related affordability and social justice implications, is a better use of limited staff resources than trying to reduce or better understand late returns.

Respectfully submitted,

_____Steve Weber_____ 10/22/24
Signature of the person (or persons) who prepared this report Date submitted

Attachments

Assessment Data

Figure 1: Selected circulation related statistics for Valley Library.

Note: Previous reports included Library of Things items in circulation data. Starting this year, they will be excluded.

	FY-18	FY-19	FY-20	FY-21	FY-22	FY-23	FY-24
Loans	68,523	58,295	36,252	8,718	18,433	21,588	21,314
Returns	67,996	57,778	35,656	8,718	17,931	20,577	18,903
Lost	1,546	897	1,097	306	620	571	391
Recalls	1,199	959	534	127	479	330	321
Renewals	12,330	8,333	5,748	2,459	6,223	6,716	3,726
Auto Renewals	27,816	18,429	8,839	3,893	10,830	10,877	8,781

Figure 2: Total people entering Valley Library

Fiscal Year	Total Visitors
FY 18	1,125,729
FY19 – FY20 Incomplete data	
FY 21	28,033
FY 22	615,650
FY 23	818,585
FY 24	911,334

Figure 3: Lost items as a percentage of overall circulation for Valley Library.

	FY-18	FY-19	FY-20	FY-21	FY-22	FY-23	FY-24
Loans	68,523	58,295	36,252	8,718	18,433	21,588	21,314
Lost	1,546	897	1,097	306	620	571	391
Percentage	2.3	1.5	3	3.5	3.4	2.6	1.8