Original Question:
How, if at all, do you factor remote-access database use into your reference or user stats?
(1/2006)

Responses:

We keep track of online catalog usage (which we're going to learn how to break down by IP address to determine Judiciary/non-Judiciary usage) by number of searches performed. We also count website hits. We could probably track other usage for Gale databases and Lexis, but we're not quite there yet with the statistical need.

I was interested in your email because I am currently trying to find ANYTHING out there that speaks of how academic libraries are keeping stats regarding their collections...counting access vs. titles. I haven't really found anything out there on the subject. Will you let me know if you run across anything while you are working on your issue and I will let you know if I run across your issue while I am researching.

The only remote access we have is to our website. I include web hits in my monthly statistics.

I've been doing a "modified" digital user stat count by pulling a monthly report from our netLibrary administrator reports feature to identify all ebook use but have not been able to separate remote access from on-site access. As for databases like WESTLAW, LEXIS and inhouse CD-ROMs loaded to a computer's hard drive, I just track the number of times I see someone using one of my public access terminals and I do an hourly "body count" on those machines so if one person is on it for 2 hours, I count him twice. That's easy since we don't have any remote access licenses for these products. I also track the number of times I walk someone through internet or remote access (or even WESTLAW or LEXIS searches they're trying to do on their own IDs from their offices) as a telephone call & bibliographic/computer instruction. Since I keep a clipboard with a daily stat sheet at my desk, it's quick and easy to track.

For the past 5 years I have reported the number of people who have visited our Web site and the number of pages they have accessed. When one adds that number to the actual in-person visitors, it beats the 100,000 visitors per year that we used to have in the 1980's. I have stressed that although fewer people are visiting, they are using our services & collection in other ways. We have a document delivery & research service, we use a courier service to deliver books, etc. These activities mean that an attorney need not visit the library in-person to obtain information. ... [our] goal has always been to encourage off-site use. Through tracking software, we are able to track those who use our remote databases. To protect privacy, we assign a code to solos, those who are in firms of 2-10, 11-20, 21-50, 51-75, 76-100, 100-125, 126-150, 150+. Then we know how many users and the type who use HeinOnline (only those with firms of 50 or fewer attorneys have access to this product, our legislative histories, periodical databases and others.

You raised some very interesting questions regarding reference stats. At this library, we keep track of desk reference stats, online searches from various databases, i.e. Westlaw, Shepherds etc. and email references. We do not have the remote-access database.

I don't think I would count it as a "human interaction." However, it is definitely a library use stat, which is worth collecting and noting. If the library wasn't there providing this valuable service, then where would the patron go/be/do?? Since neither your, nor your staff, provided any assistance, though, in gaining access & using the db, I don't think you can count as a reference type of stat. However, you can qualify the stat by saying that the librarian is REQUIRED to negotiate with the vendor to get the licence to provide this valued & valuable tool/service, and as well, the librarian is REQUIRED to set the database service up on your website, etc, etc. So there is NEED for the librarian to make it all happen. Plus, you are there for the patron to call for help when they get stuck, which they do... That's just my 2 cents worth...