

DICTIONARY

Seventh Edition (2003)

By Keith Curry Lance, State Data Coordinator for Colorado and Steering Committee Member

ADJUDICATION The process through which the FSCS data must pass each year before being released officially by NCES. Not unlike the process your father put your first date through when he came to pick you up for the Prom. Or, your date's father put you through--... oh, you get the idea.

ALTAR CALL Whenever the State Data Coordinators (SDCs) really get down to business, cussing and discussing the definitions of FSCS data elements, there is frequently a series of seemingly spontaneous "confessions" from SDCs. When this happens, be the first to exclaim "altar call!"

AMIGO..Friend to speakers of Spanish, Mary Jo Lynch's primary means of transportation, and Darla Cottrill's (OH) second favorite means of transportation after her Harley. (Mary Jo is the outgoing director of ALA's Office for Research & Statistics, a position that has earned her a life sentence on the FSCS Steering Committee. She is also the "mother" of FSCS--see "Church Basement").

BOOKS LEFT ON THE TABLE PER

TYPICAL WEEK Some NCES statistician's wicked re-naming of "in-library use per typical week"--a skewering that has kept this output measure out of the FSCS collection to date.

BUTT COUNT Another name for users of electronic services per typical week. (Depending on how you count it.)

CAROLYN Arkansas SDC Carolyn Ashcraft is the outgoing chair of the FSCS Steering Committee. She's brought a touch of class to the Steering committee, whose members owe it to her that they know each other's birthdays. Ask her why she had to contract an ersatz "marriage" with Colorado SDC Keith Lance to get out of D.C. after 9/11.

CHURCH BASEMENT The date: March 1986. The place: St. James Episcopal Church fellowship hall, across the street from ALA Headquarters (ALA's biggest room was taken that day). This was the site of the first meeting of state representatives and Mary Jo on the pilot project that produced FSCS. You think you've got it bad? Pilot project participants collected over 100 items together. Forty-something is sounding better all the time, huh? (You only have to take off one mitten to count the number of "survivors" of the church basement still in our midst. See State Librarians.)

DENISE John Lorenz's successor in the late '90's and early '00's, Denise Davis was the first NCLIS staffer to hold the title Director of Statistics & Surveys. Most of what we've figured out about how to count electronic services we owe to her. As Oregon's director of library development, she's now the supervisor of a State Data Coordinator.

DINING ON THE MARY JO RULE

Nothing complicates those on-your-own dinners out with friends like having to divvy up the check at the end of the meal. (Once in a while you can get separate checks, but don't count on it.) You are dining out on the Mary Jo Rule when, at the end of the meal, everyone gives the waiter their credit card, the waiter is asked to add 15 percent and divide by the number of people at the table, and charge each card accordingly. As long as the restaurant isn't a "per diem buster," it all works out in the end. (Not for the faint of heart or tight of purse, but it works for a lot of us. Don't worry; we'll still want to eat with you. But, you bring the calculator!)

DITCH One of the last Mary Jo-isms: When picking your battles at FSCS conferences, just think to yourself "This is not the ditch I want to die in!"

"DR. DATA" Also known as Bob Molyneux, Director of Statistics & Surveys for NCLIS. Nobody has a better eye (or is that nose?) for data quality, or cares about it more. But watch out; he has a very dry, off-beat sense of humor, and is inclined to buy funny hats.

ECKARD AWARD Helen Eckard was a librarian at the National Center for

Education Statistics and an early supporter of the Library Statistics Program. She is the namesake of the award for innovative and exemplary uses of FSCS data. Don't be shy about nominating your own state statistical report or Web site in which you, your colleagues, and/or consultants working for your agency have made interesting use of public library statistics.

FEDS The collective nickname of all of the staff from federal agencies that work with FSCS--particularly the Census Bureau, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS). ... with an occasional appearance by someone from the Institute for Museum and Library Services or the National Institute for Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning. See the latter under "N."

FSCS The acronym for this project. F - S - C - S. Which, of course, brings to mind data on public libraries--right? Yes, we know--not a P, L, or D in sight. You're going to spend the next (how many?) years of your life trying to come up with a pithy way to refer to this annual national meeting you go to on public library statistics.

GERRY The guy from Iowa ("the Gateway to the Rectangular States") is Gerry Rowland. That's pronounced as if it were spelled "Gary"--NOT "Jerry." Get it right. He won't say anything, but he'll be impressed--and grateful--all the same.

GREAT ESCAPE, THE The steering committee was meeting in Washington, DC, on Tuesday, September 11, 2001--the day of the World Trade Center attack. It took

the rest of that week and several trains, buses, and automobiles to get everybody home. Everybody who was there has their own tale to tell.

HARLEY Like we said earlier... Darla Cottrill's (OH) preferred mode of transportation. Someone, somewhere has a photograph of Darla in her "Harley Mama" outfit, riding Mary Jo's Amigo. (Phoenix workshop, 1990)

HEAD COUNT The more genteel nickname for users of electronic services per typical week. See also Butt Count.

IMPUTATION Hifalutin' NCES statistical lingo for "We don't care if they left it blank, if you don't make it up, we will." We can't have national totals going up and down from year to year simply because some libraries don't bother to report something.

INTERLIBRARY LOAN The first of many Mary Jo-isms (well, she's the first one we heard it from): "There's just one thing wrong with calling these transactions 'interlibrary loan.' They aren't just interlibrary any more and they never were just loans!" (Think photocopies.)

JOB DESCRIPTION OF A STATE

DATA COORDINATOR Don't forget to read this for yourself. And, if you have a new—or newer—Chief Officer, it might not be a bad idea to run it past him or her, too.

JOHN LORENZ Also known as "the grand old man of libraryland." John was the

first person to hold the position now occupied by "Dr. Data." (See D's.)

KEPPEL AWARD Francis Keppel, one-time U.S. Commissioner of Education, was an early proponent of high-quality national library statistics. He is the namesake of the annual award to states that submit complete, edited data on time.

LONE ARRANGER Keith Lance's nickname--on account of his penchant for organizing dinners and theatrical performances for on-our-own evenings and tours of historic sites during extra weekends tagged onto trips to FSCS workshops and steering committee meetings.

MARY JO Mary Jo Lynch, the longtime director of the ALA Office for Research & Statistics was the single person most responsible for the development of FSCS. Her office hosted the "Church Basement" meeting. (See C's.) She was a permanent member of the FSCS Steering Committee. She retired in December 2003. To say that she is missed doesn't even begin to cover it.

MINUS ONE HAPPENS The date: December 1989. The place: New Orleans. Seen as a button and a t-shirt, asserting the impossibility of getting some libraries to respond to all items (rather than a blank, "-1" is our code for a non-report or missing data--See Imputation)

N/A Whether it means “not available” or “not applicable,” this is the response we don’t want to see for any of the FSCS data elements.

NIGHT WATCHMAN..Whenever we get too carried away with “the magic of FSCS,” Mary Jo always reminds us that the definitions we labor over so intensely ultimately succeed or fail based on how local library staff understand and apply them. Or, as Mary Jo puts it, “Remember, the night watchman writes down what he damn well pleases.”

“NO SNIVELING” Anybody who went to dinner in Tucson last year with newly minted NCLIS staffer Bob Molyneux has a “Hawaiian”-patterned baseball cap bearing this motto. While you aren’t likely to see many of those caps this year, we like the sentiment!

OFFICE SUPPLIES The South Carolina State Library has become notorious for eliminating its office supplies budget whenever the state budget gets tight. Needless to say, that’s happening again. So, hang onto your free hotel pens and notepads or don’t turn your back on SC SDC and steering committee secretary Libby Law!

O - OR - 0 A.k.a. “zero.” Just the response we want to see if the library hasn’t got—or didn’t do—any of something during the reporting year.

PAPERWEIGHTS Once the traditional gift to the outgoing Steering Committee chair from the continuing members of the committee. Boy, are we ever glad that trend ran its course!

QUIT Something we State Data Coordinator types never do. We may get into quagmires and quarrels--even turn a bit quixotic or try to quash each other--when discussing definitions for new questions; make each other quake reporting “how we do it back home;” make some people quiver at the thought of new data elements; quibble about semantics; and drive some people to become very quiet while others try to quell dissension in the ranks with a quip. But, we never--EVER--quit! The only way out of this “outfit” is questing on to bigger, grander things. See State Librarians. (Sorry I couldn’t come up with more than one “Q!”)

RESPONSE TIME To a Fed: the amount of time that elapses before all of the states and territories have submitted their data to NCES. To the local library staffer who filled out your questionnaire: the amount of time it takes you to publish the state statistical report after they’ve sent back their questionnaire. To us: the amount of time that elapses before that last local library returns their completed questionnaire.

STATE LIBRARIANS Anybody with ambitions to be a state librarian should jump at the chance to serve as a State Data

Coordinator. An incredibly large and growing number of SDCs have become library development chiefs, assistant state librarians, or state librarians. Witness our latest example: former Steering Committee chair and current Secretary of the West Virginia Library Commission, J.D. Waggoner. He moved directly from being an elected SDC on the Steering Committee to being COSLA's representative to it.

THUNDER THIGHS Ask Darla

Cottrill to identify "Thunder Thighs" for you. At our first conference in Arizona a dozen years ago, he was an even bigger hit than the barbecue.

TRANSACTIONS Remember, you are supposed to have read "the Bible:" **Output Measures for Public Libraries**. We don't have plain circulation, interlibrary loan, and reference questions anymore. That's circulation transactions, ILL transactions, and reference transactions. (Have you heard the one about the library whose circulation figures doubled when they shifted from counting circulation to counting circulation transactions? Out, one transaction. In, another transaction. See also Night Watchman.)

UNDUPLICATED ANNUAL HOURS

Why annual? Doesn't everyone think of hours of operation on a weekly basis? Well, not us! Almost everything else we collect is an annual number, so this needs to be, too. Otherwise, we'd have no way to account for seasonal changes, temporary closures, etc.

VOLUMES VS. TITLES We know our days are numbered--so to speak--but we're still counting from a warehouse mentality. How many things does the library have? If it's got four copies of the same title, report four--not one. (The author stopped counting titles as well as volumes in his state after finding an inordinate number of libraries reporting four times as many titles as volumes. At that time, Colorado must have had the nation's largest number of public library collections composed entirely of Reader's Digest Condensed.)

WALT Who else could this letter remind us of but Walt. E. Walter Terrie, Ph.D. Sociologist. Demographer. Political Scientist. And, a "founding father" of FSCS. Walt was in on it from the beginning of the DC committee meetings (1988). His association with the Florida State Library didn't last long after that, but he was a fixture of the Steering Committee and the resident expert on software and statistical issues. Walt's real claim to fame was as a political demographer. And to think, we actually knew someone who redrew Congressional districts! (It explains a lot about Congressional politics, doesn't it?) Walt's brilliance was matched only by his eccentricity. What a great character--and how we miss him. Just imagine what Walt would have had to say about the last Presidential election!

X Not an acceptable signature on your Chief Officer's certification of your state's data. Don't forget to have him or her sign that page and be sure to mail it after you have completed your state's annual data submission. It's easy to forget.

YES We even have a few items now that are simply Yes/No questions. (Example: if the library has Internet access)

ZIP PLUS FOUR What do you mean, they don't know what it is?!? Don't libraries in your state (territory) get junk mail? Now, honestly, if you're going to be that kind of a pushover as a State Data Coordinator, you're going to have to keep coming back to these things year after year, after year, after year ...