

**Institution Name**

Carl Sandburg College

**Institution Characteristics**

Public Community College; Fall 2019 FTE: 1,194; Full-time library staff: 1 faculty status librarian, 1 administrator, 1 support staff

**CARLI Counts Participant Name + Job Title**

Rebecca Eaton, Coordinator of Library Services

**Project Name/Title**

Impact of Library Reserve Shelf Materials on Student Success

**Single Sentence Abstract**

Carl Sandburg College Library investigated the impact of the availability of required textbooks via the library's reserve shelf on student success by comparing cumulative course grades of all Sandburg students enrolled during the 2018-19 academic year and found that students who had access to required textbooks on the reserve shelf were more successful than students who were responsible for purchasing their required course materials.

**Motivation(s) for Project**

While college, university, and academic library literature points to textbook availability in academic libraries as an important factor in student retention and persistence, Carl Sandburg College Library wanted concrete data about our local collection's connection to student success before formally updating our policy to support purchasing required course materials. The library's current collection development policy restricts the purchase of textbooks, stating that "[t]he Library does not purchase textbooks, workbooks, or study guides (with the exception of test prep guides in the Career Collection). If an instructor wishes to place a copy of materials being used as a text on reserve, the instructor is responsible for acquiring said material." This project was vital to making the final decision to update our policy to support purchasing textbooks for reserve due to past concerns raised by former library administration about the cost of such an undertaking. It also served as an entry point for library staff to continue to evaluate other resources provided by the library and their impact on student success.

**Partners and Stakeholders**

Carl Sandburg College Library collaborated with the college bookstore and with the college's Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE). The bookstore provided us with a list of required textbooks for courses in the 2018-19 academic year. This allowed our Coordinator of Library Instructional Services to produce a list of courses that had required textbooks on reserve in the library and a list of courses that were OER. That list was given to IE's Coordinator of Data Assurance and Statistical Research who then compiled all of the student course grade data based on the type of course they were enrolled in (e.g. "Reserve" materials available, "OER," or "No Treatment"—see Appendix A for final data results).

**Inquiry Question**

What is the effect of the availability of required textbooks on reserve in the library on student success in the course compared to courses that are OER and courses for which students must purchase textbooks? For this project, “student success” is defined by course completion with a cumulative grade of A, B, or C.

### **Study Participants/Population**

The participants in our study were all students enrolled in Sandburg courses during the Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters.

### **Method(s) of Data Collection and Analysis**

We compared a list of required textbooks from the college bookstore to our reserve shelf to determine which courses have required textbooks available on reserve and which courses do not have required textbooks on reserve. This list also tells us if a course is OER. We then collected data from Institutional Effectiveness to see if student success rates varied between those categories of courses.

### **Findings**

Through this project, we learned that there is a positive correlation between student success and textbook availability, either through the library’s reserve shelf or OER. Student success rates were slightly higher for those who had access to their textbook through the library’s course reserves, followed by success rates for students who were in OER courses. The lowest success rates were for those who were responsible for purchasing required course materials.

### **Use of Findings**

As a result of our findings, the library will be updating our Collection Development Policy for the following academic year to incorporate the purchase of required textbooks for our course reserves. Library staff will also present our findings to faculty in order to encourage them to adopt OER in their courses and to work with the library to provide cost-effective alternatives such as reserve shelf materials for students.

### **Next Steps and Other Results**

When our library took on this project, our initial intentions were to evaluate whether or not our reserve shelf had an impact on student success. However, as we received the final data from Sandburg’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, we realized that this project opened up a larger conversation as to the library’s overall role in supporting educational equity for our students. For example, we theorize that the reason why students had an overall lower success rate in OER courses than in courses where the textbook was available on the library reserve shelf might be due to lack of internet access at home, thus encouraging us to explore the idea of circulating Hotspots. Upon implementing the new service, we would conduct the study again to determine if providing Wi-Fi access to students at home increases student success in OER courses. CARLI Counts has inspired our library and provided us with the tools necessary to explore this theory and other questions so that we can continue to expand our resources to better serve our students.

### **Additional Reflections**

Our library is proof that assessment projects *are* within reach for smaller libraries, though it might only be possible through strong partnerships with other departments on campus. Some additional context is that at the time of our project’s completion, we only had two full time staff members employed at the library—one administrator and one support staff—with no advanced knowledge of assessment practices. We were very fortunate in that our Office of Institutional Effectiveness went above and beyond to provide data for

this project. If another library of our size wishes to pursue a similar project, it is highly recommended that they begin by fostering relationships with other departments on campus that routinely work with data assessment.

## Appendix A

Final data set compiled by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness for Academic Year 2018-19

	Total	Pass	Percentage	A	A%	B	B%	C	C%	D	D%	F	F%	I	I%	W	W%
<b>OER</b>	2395	1923	80.29%	855	35.70%	688	28.73%	380	15.87%	106	4.43%	126	5.26%	3	0.13%	237	9.90%
<b>RESERVE</b>	2742	2303	83.99%	969	35.34%	783	28.56%	551	20.09%	122	4.45%	97	3.54%	7	0.26%	213	7.77%
<b>NO TREATMENT</b>	5747	4587	79.82%	2021	35.17%	1616	28.12%	950	16.53%	261	4.54%	294	5.12%	16	0.28%	589	10.25%