Problem Statement

This project developed out of a number of various problems:

- Numbers indicating total resource use, but no possible way to know how many individuals those figures represented
- Not being able to identify “library users” for the purposes of development, as we do not have explicitly “library alumni”
- Increasing pressure to show impact on student retention, a significant initiative on Murray State’s campus
- Desire to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about library impact and value

Review of the Literature

Students who use the library at least once in their first semester tend to have higher GPAs and are more likely to be retained than those who don’t.

Methods & Data Visualization

To determine the relationship between library use and retention, and also to start finding solutions to the other problems stated, we first had to tie library use to the individual rather than simply relying on usage counters. That meant building a large dataset of all users and unobtrusively tracking their library use for Fall 2013 by student number. The infrastructure we built to gather this data is described below:

- Identify Sources of Library Use Data (I/S, Illiad, EZproxy, etc.)
- Turn off automatic proxying on campus (require even on-campus users to log in)
- Collect course registration numbers of all instruction sessions
- Gather IDs from Writing & Comm centers

This initiative was not without its challenges. Among them:

- Concerns for user privacy
- Lack of an integrated management system
- Questions about management of data
- Establishing understanding among our own staff

The statistical analysis conducted on the dataset was a binary logistic regression. All fields of library use and retention were either 1 (yes), or 2 (no). There were not distinctions between how many things were checked out or how many logins to the proxy were made, but simply whether they used the service at least once. We will continue this research for a longitudinal analysis, and also consider adding additional elements such as asking reference questions.

Largest Predictors of Retention:

- Students who use the library in some way are nearly twice as likely to be retained as students who do not use any library services.
- Students who borrow books or use electronic resources are also likely to graduate than those who do not.
- Students who use EZproxy are around 4 times as likely to graduate as students who do not.
- Students who use the proxy in November are around 2 times as likely as those using in December.
- Students who borrowed books are around 1.5 times as likely as those who did not.

Claims and Contributions

Students who use the library in some way are nearly twice as likely to be retained as students who do not use any library services.