

Statistical and Qualitative Software Support Service

Needs Assessment and Recommendations

Executive Summary -- DRAFT

Spring 2009

Background

The Statistical and Qualitative Software Support Service moved from University Information Services (IS) to Libraries and Media Services (LMS) in 2006. LMS saw this as an important extension of its goal of supporting the access to and use of information—in this case the information being data. The move included one staff position, then occupied by Jan Winchell, that provided consulting services and modest budget support for software (\$47,000). Jan has since retired, and the position was filled in May 2008 by Tina Ughrin.

The services and software offered had largely remained constant for some time. With the organizational and staff changes that had taken place, it was determined a needs assessment would identify any needed changes to services and software to insure this service has the greatest possible impact on meeting campus teaching and research needs.

The issues facing this service are:

- What mix of services would support the greatest number of campus users to serve both teaching and research needs?
- What set of software packages would have the greatest impact on needs?
- What combination of funding approaches might be used to address needs?
- What efforts might be taken to do more to promote the availability of software and support services to key user groups?

These prompted LMS to undertake a campus-wide needs assessment in fall 2008. The *stakeholders* were identified as: KSU students (graduate and undergraduate), faculty, and administrators/staff. The following report highlights the findings and presents recommendations coming from the study.

Sources of Input

Input for the study came from a variety of sources:

- focus groups including all stakeholder groups
- campus-wide online survey
- survey of services at other institutions
- literature search of use of software reported in the journal literature of several disciplines
- various internal sources including
 - client database
 - budget reports
 - current software collection

Recommendations

1. Advisory Panel for the Statistical and Qualitative Software Service

We recommend the creation of a statistical and qualitative software advisory panel that consists of faculty, administrators, and students representing a variety of colleges, departments, and centers. The Panel would provide formative feedback on software and support service needs, assist in reviewing budget constraints, and propose the addition and elimination of software.

2. Stable centralized financial support

A very strong argument can be made for centralizing the purchase of statistical and qualitative software through the Libraries. More software, with more seats, is made available than is possible through departmental funds alone. Student needs are addressed, which is typically not possible through software purchased through grant funding. Centralized purchasing also allows for providing support services for a core set packages.

We recommend that the current static allocation for software (\$47,000 from the tech fee) be made a permanent transfer to the Libraries' budget and increased to \$50,000 with an annual 4% increase to address inflation. This will maintain the status quo for currently licensed packages with the same number of seats. These funds will be supplemented to a small degree by sales of locally licensed software.

3. Other possible funding models

The Advisory Panel will be called upon to advise on needed changes and to explore other models to insure software availability. One is for this Service to act as a broker to bring together interested parties to obtain a software package at a more attractive price than they could get individually. Also for consideration is the creation of an open statistics computer lab with one or two seats available for lesser used packages to provide access to students, or short-term loan of a laptop with specialty software installed.

4. Optimum model for software support services

We recommend that the Service continue to offer one-on-one consulting, but place greater emphasis on on-demand seminars and extensive online tutorials. This is consistent with the focus group and survey data and will make it possible to serve a larger portion of the KSU community. The Service will continue to survey on-demand seminar patrons and will expand the survey tool to include online users and one-on-one clients. Such formative feedback will help in the updating of training materials and adjusting presentation formats to better serve patrons' needs.

5. Support of ethical use

The Service needs to continue to monitor software licenses and be an advocate for appropriate use. It is clear that prices judged to be too steep for locally sold copies can lead to wide-spread piracy. The Libraries' new online software management system makes it easier to track the legal use of software allowed through license agreements.

6. Promotion of available software and support services to key user groups.

We recommend that the Service continue to use the various dissemination avenues presently in place and that further collaboration be established with KSU centers and the Faculty Professional Development Center in particular.