Changing Needs, Fundamental Tool:
Using Bowker Book Analysis System for Ongoing Assessment
In 2012, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) Libraries initiated a much-needed collection assessment project. With a plan in hand, Collection Development librarian Tom Reich knew they would need a trusted solution to support their goals to maintain and enhance their collection.

“I’ve been working at the library here for over 20 years...we developed a collection assessment plan for the first time in a number of years,” Reich said. “We saw the need to assess our collections and at the same time protect key resources.”

The UWSP Library was looking for an integrated assessment tool and selected the Bowker Book Analysis System (BBAS) together with Resources for College Libraries (RCL). BBAS helped UWSP evaluate library holdings with consideration of evolving collection services, including: “Changing of the times, more emphasis on electronic resources...just the ability to get all of our holdings into one mechanism and have some assistance and analysis of sorts.”

At the time of their initial assessment, UWSP had 10 librarians on staff. The library team drafted a set of guidelines that included retaining any titles listed in the RCL core subject bibliographies and then they went to work, using BBAS to benchmark the collection and generate data for reporting, faculty collaboration, and decision-making.

“In 2012, 2013 we did it more as individual librarians. We presented to our academic departments across the board [and showed them] percentiles, how it would look, and then maybe a year or two later, how we would look at the assessment again. And then [we] posted the information on our LibGuide.” As a result, UWSP was able to confidently recommend books for withdrawal based on usage statistics, publication date, and BBAS/RCL metrics.

But UWSP’s need for collection analysis did not stop there. The campus has been using BBAS for over a decade for continuous assessment and is now using it to help them with another major project: the library’s relocation.
New Space, Trusted Tool

“We had a six-story building plus a lower level. Our new building will only be three and a half stories, with other units coming in from campus, so our shelf space is really going to be down,” Reich said. “We have to really narrow down our collections and will need to continue to do so because of space considerations within the new building.”

Reich said the magnitude of titles that needed to be relocated, coupled with a reduction in library personnel, required all hands on-deck for their move and the collection decisions it demanded. “I believe we’ve moved 800,000 volumes...that’s a big project,” he said. “We have seven or eight full-time librarians...with the intensity of the relocation coming up, all librarians and our library staff got involved in this in a large team effort.”

UWSP Libraries again used BBAS with trusted RCL data to inform their efforts: identifying key works to keep onsite, selecting titles to move to storage, weeding responsibly, and demonstrating collection value.

“We weeded, I believe, almost 18% of our collection in the last two years and our goal now is to hit 20% in the next year or two. A tool like [BBAS] is just invaluable, even in an administrator’s eyes. We’re meeting our goals of providing a valid collection in a smaller space.”

The library will move into the new building in three years and Reich anticipates UWSP utilizing BBAS for the foreseeable future.
Moving Forward with BBAS

“We've lost a lot of our workforce and space, budgets have been hard, so that gives us more reason perhaps to continue to assess our collections,” stated Reich. “We are actually enhancing our collection and it will continue to be a good player in that.”

For libraries with limited staff and resources, BBAS enriches collection services across workflows with content developed by ACRL/CHOICE subject specialists and peer-reviewed by academic librarians and faculty. BBAS delivers data to support library staff, with features that also help to diversify collections, find digital resources, and communicate collection strengths and weaknesses to stakeholders.

BBAS benefits the UWSP campus beyond the library by aiding faculty as well, said Reich. “All of our campus faculty are potentially selectors. They're empowered when we weed [the collection] because we post our potential withdrawal candidates for them to look at. Providing analysis of our holdings and core percentiles is key when faculty and departments ask how we're providing support.”

Ultimately, Reich said that BBAS has been an impactful resource for the UWSP Library through changing needs and different collection initiatives. “The facets of it—along with RCL and Books in Print—are fundamental to us maintaining our collections and enhancing them.”

About University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

UW-Stevens Point was founded in 1894 and offers three welcoming campuses in the heart of Wisconsin. The 406-acre campus offers More than 100 program options within 80 baccalaureate degree programs, 90 minors, and 17 graduate programs. The college serves more than 8,100 students across its campuses.

About Bowker Book Analysis System

Bowker Book Analysis System (BBAS) is a collection assessment tool that provides customized statistics and comprehensive reports based on the peer-reviewed Resources for College Libraries core titles, all in an easy-to-use interface. For libraries with limited staff, space, and budgets, BBAS is a cost-effective tool used for: liaison support, diversity audits, benchmarking, weeding, and ebook acquisitions.