



Electronic
Resources & Libraries
#004
UCLA Productions

Composing

Rock 'n' Roll

Stories

from the

Usage Data Blues

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Agenda

- About this session
- The usage data blues
- A rock 'n' roll alternative
- Conclusions and questions



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This session is NOT about

- Adding staff
- Learning SQL
- Using MS Access
- Feeling sad and sorry



[51st Street Blues](#) by [ClixYou](#) on [Flickr](#)

This session IS about

- Working with existing usage data
- Improving skills with familiar tools
- Creatively persuading stakeholders
- Using data to answer questions or solve problems



Red Cadillac, sans black moustache
by Jean-François Chénier on Flickr

Data's current state

Organizations gather data...

Librarians want to base decisions on data...

Stakeholders expect decisions based on data...

...but still we have data troubles.

Those Usage Data Blues

There's too much data,
from too many sources.

Those Usage Data Blues

There's not time or staff
enough to process the data.

Those Usage Data Blues

No one is interested in what
the data says.

A rock 'n' roll alternative

Take on only small chunks of data

Learn to manipulate data with Excel

Present data
in brief, exciting
stories



Lose the Blues, #1

There's too much data, from
too many sources.



Lose the Blues, #1

- Identify types and sources of usage data
- Choose ONE you can manage
- Ignore the rest

Data onslaught

- Information providers
- Link resolvers
- Federated search tools
- A-Z lists
- Proxy servers
- Gate counts
- Service desk transactions
- Checkout / browse
- OPAC searches
- Web page visits

Data stream

➤ Link resolvers

Choose data that's...

- Collected consistently
- Spanning several years
- Focused on a specific activity
- Interesting to you
- Accessible by you



Lose the Blues, #2

There's not time or staff
enough to process the data.



Lose the Blues, #2

- Acknowledge your limits
- Recognize your abilities
- Employ Excel

Acknowledge your limits

You can't:

- Manage all of the organization's data by yourself
- Expect significant assistance at the beginning of this or any data project
- Work miracles

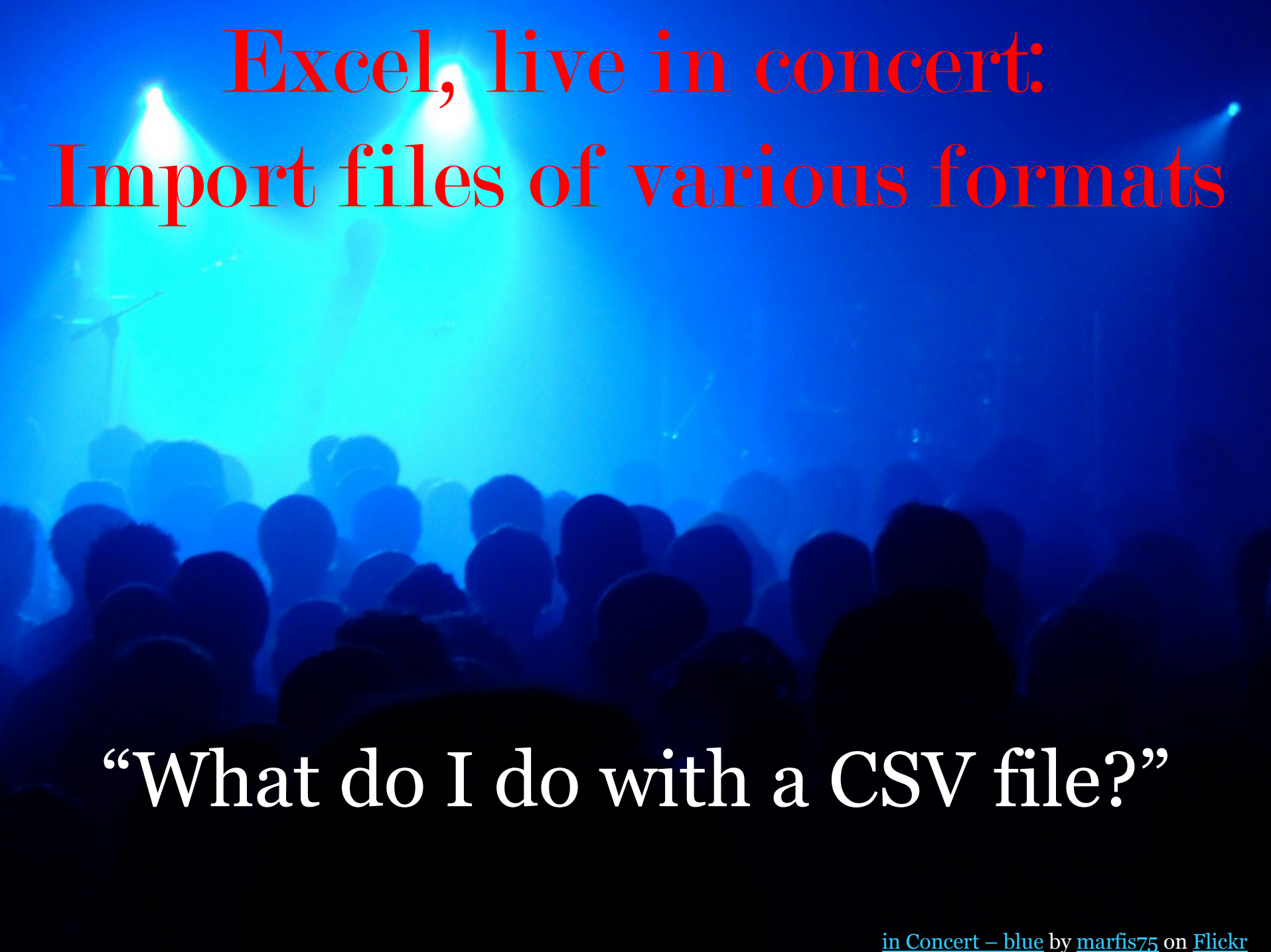
Recognize your abilities

You can:

- Tie data analysis to the organization's strategic plan
- Analyze data using tools you already have
- Publicize the results of your work

Why Excel?

- Used in many organizations at all levels
- Help is widely available at little/no cost
- Feature-rich
- Versatile:
 - Translate data into graphs
 - Transfer data and structure into Access or other database

The background of the slide is a photograph of a large crowd of people at a concert. The scene is dimly lit, with bright blue stage lights illuminating the audience from above. The silhouettes of the people's heads are visible in the foreground, creating a sense of being part of the crowd.

Excel, live in concert: Import files of various formats

“What do I do with a CSV file?”

Excel, live in concert: Consolidate similar information



“How can I quickly total a year of data from monthly worksheets?”

Excel, live in concert: Conditional formatting



“I want to know every instance of
usage lower than ____ per ____.”

Lose the Blues, #3

No one is interested in what
the data says.



Lose the Blues, #3

- Stop relying on spreadsheets to communicate your data
- Tell stories

The trouble with spreadsheets

Let's suppose...

- A journal experiences a nasty price increase
- The subject librarian asks,
“Is this journal worth keeping?”

The trouble with spreadsheets

	A	B	C	D	E
1	<i>Small</i> 1613-6810	Requests	Clickthroughs	Click/Req Ratio	Rank in Wiley Target out of 473 active titles
2	Aug-07	3	3	100%	70
3	Sep-07	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Oct-07	7	6	86%	53
5	Nov-07	6	6	100%	53
6	Dec-07	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Jan-08	11	11	100%	13
8	Feb-08	11	11	100%	22
9	Mar-08	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Apr-08	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
11	May-08	8	8	100%	22
12	Jun-08	7	6	86%	26
13	Jul-08	13	10	77%	10
14	Aug-08	9	7	78%	19

The trouble with spreadsheets

About *Small* (ISSN 1613-6810):

- In 12 months, usage increased enough to improve its ranking by at least 73% among Wiley journals accessed through SFX.
- In 12 months, at least 77% of uses that were initiated via SFX clicked through the menu to acquire full text.

Telling stories

➤ Your data has: i.e.: A story!

- Context
- Setting
- Complexities
- Conflict



➤ Are you telling the stories in your data?

Why stories?

- Invoke oral tradition
- Contextualize numeric and other information
- Package information for many formats
- Choose which information gets emphasis

Compose a rocking data story

➤ Write what you know

➤ Focus

➤ Keep it brief
and meaningful



What to write about?

- Answer a question
 - Publicly discuss often-asked questions
 - Answer questions you wish you were asked
- Discover something new
 - Combine two data sources and see what happens
- Question your audience
 - What do stakeholders want to know?

Data stories are everywhere

What's on the minds of patrons who approach service desks? Any common threads?

Sources: service desk transaction records

Data stories are everywhere

When a movie based on a book is released, does it affect the book's circulation?

Sources: movie releases; checkouts/holds before/during relevant time period

Data stories are everywhere

What have we purchased lately that our patrons used to request through ILL?

Sources: ILL borrowing; acquisitions

Data stories are everywhere

Did students take advantage of extra open hours during Finals Week?

Sources: building hours; gate counts

Conclusions

- Don't wait for your organization to recover from the usage data blues
- You can lead the recovery:
 - Use existing data
 - Manipulate it with familiar tools
 - Tell stories about the results
- Convince yourself to act; your actions will persuade others

Questions and discussion

K-State Libraries' Data Stories:

<http://ksulib.typepad.com/sfxdoc/data>

Contact me:

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