

Discretionary Support of History: *mhist* Analysis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This report presents a data-driven analysis of spending on 2014-2019 firm order purchases on the *mhist* fund to support the UT Libraries' History collection. A primary part of the analysis will examine how the general History monograph fund, *mhist*, was used before its reallocation and how it is now being used to support various history sub-disciplines. Purchasing data will also tell its own story on how *mhist* spending practices correlate with the current collection development plan: to buy the best content for the best price, that is also easy to discover and use.

KEY FINDINGS

The data illustrates the following primary points:

- Since 2014, we have been spending more of our *mhist* budget on eBooks while the individual price of eBooks has also increased.
- Appropriately, the *mhist* spending on European History stops when the *mheur* fund for European History is created.
- Since the *mhist* fund redistribution, *mhist* has overall become less focused on U.S. History, designated by E and F Library of Congress classifications.
- Just over half of the fund is spent on General History and U.S. History since the *mhist* fund redistribution; the remaining portion is spent on a variety of Humanities, Fine Arts and Social Sciences resources.
- Over the period of study, there has been a steady decline in *mhist* support for General History with a D classification.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, discretionary spending and format priorities have changed since Paul Rascoe's retirement and subsequent fund reallocations. In all Figures, the data shows a decrease in the number of titles purchased that one would expect during a split in funds.

Additionally, while the data shows a majority of spending on General and U.S. History as the fund reallocation intended, there is less of a General History focus in the last two fiscal periods. Regardless of discipline, the data tells us that we are using more of the *mhist* fund to buy less content, while we shift our format priority to increase ease of access. As we continue to adjust to budgetary changes and purchase more electronic resources to anticipate user needs, it would also be practical to ensure that those using History resources generally prefer convenience over less content.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

BACKGROUND

After History liaison, Paul Rascoe, retired in 2016, the *mhist* fund and the History liaison position itself were split into history subdisciplines. Following his departure, Shiela Winchester, Ian Goodale and a UT Libraries GRA reallocated the funds for various sub-classes of History and for their new, appropriate liaison. In late 2017, a portion of the *mhist* fund was placed into a new fund for firm order purchases supporting European History, called *mheur*. After the *mhist* fund reallocation, its new purpose was to support collections in General History, United States History, and areas of study like History of Science, History of Philosophy and other histories of scholarship.

The study of History at UT Libraries is supported through multiple funds with multiple fund managers. As such, there are many decision makers. The exception is *mhist*, which has multiple decision makers but on just one fund. Therefore, it functions more like the collaborative and broad disciplinary fund that supports the social sciences rather than other independent humanities funds.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

At the onset, the following questions framed the inquiry into the support of History:

1. What is the true scope of *mhist* support for History collections, that is, their subject coverage, before and after the fund reallocation?
2. What is the depth of the collections from 2014-2019, that is, the amount and type of material that comprises the History collection purchased by *mhist*?
3. Where is the most activity happening and on what fund?
4. Ideally, how would funds supporting History be allocated and spent?

While these questions would be useful for a deep analysis of UTL support of History, time constraints dictated a smaller focus on just the *mhist* fund.

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Background information on the history of History collections was gathered by conducting informal informational interviews with Merry Burlingham (Head of Acquisitions and Processing), Dale Correa (Librarian for Middle Eastern Studies and History Coordinator), Ian Goodale (European Studies Librarian), PG Moreno (Librarian for American Studies, African and African Diaspora Studies, Anthropology, Global Studies, et al.), Mary Rader (South Asian Studies Librarian) and Shiela Winchester (Librarian for Classics, Philosophy, Religion, et al.).

Using Sierra, lists were created to examine spending on the following funds: *mhist* (History firm orders), *mheur* (European History firm orders), *meuro* (European Studies firm orders), *rbrod* (Brodin Endowment for American History), *rlitl* (Littlefield Endowment for Southern History). However, the project was appropriately rescaled due to time constraints and analysis focused primarily on the *mhist* fund. The records generated were compiled into CSVs that included the following data features:

1. OCLC Number
2. Author
3. Title
4. Publication Information, including Publisher, Publication Date and Location
5. List Price
6. Amount Paid
7. Order Date
8. Library of Congress (LC) Call Number

The types of resources included in the report include print, eBook, maps, general electronic resources such as newspaper archives, document collections and databases that are one time purchases or firm order purchases that pay for annual or service fees.

The Library of Congress Classification guide outlined the titles of the call number classes and subclasses notated in Sierra records (*Library of Congress Classification Outline*, n.d.)

A spreadsheet of the cleaned fund data can be downloaded from the GitHub repository listed in the Bibliography.

DATA ANALYSIS

Please refer to the Figures in Appendix A or [visit this Tableau Public page](#) to interact with the Figures and additional data.

Figure 1

These graphs in Figure 1 explain activity on the *mhist* fund, from 2014-2019, by analyzing the number of items purchased, formats purchased and overall spend on the fund. The top graphs show total records divided by format. The bottom graphs show total spending divided by format. Represented but unexplored in these graphs is the shift of funds out of *mhist* and into *mheur*, that took place in Sierra in 2017. The drop in number of titles acquired during the high point of 2016-2017 (366 items), to 122 in 2018-2019 and the drop in the amount of spending from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 (\$16,914 to \$11,134) is explained by the shift in fund distribution.

The data is telling three different stories:

- 1) Paul managed the fund up until 2016. As such, the bar graphs on the left show activity under his oversight of the fund. From September 2014-August 2015, Paul prioritized print material: 78% of the resource type and 62% of fund expenditures were for print.
- 2) While monographs (both print and electronic) dominate the funds' activity throughout the years, it is clear that on occasion the fund supports unique purchases. For example, In 2015-2016, 17% of the fund was used to purchase maps and in 2018-2019, 20% of the fund was used to purchase one streaming video title.
- 3) The first year after Paul retired, prioritization of print books continued until September 2017 when a shift occurred to equally prioritize print and electronic books. Interestingly, in the 2018-2019 period there was a relatively equal amount of eBooks and print books purchased (49% and 50%, respectively) but spending shifted significantly to eBooks. Only one fifth of book spending was for print in 2018-2019.

Figure 2A and 2B

These box and whisker plots show relationships between number of items and the amount paid for each item, within various fiscal periods. Each circle size indicates the number of items, and circle distribution describes items across a range of prices. The outliers are illustrated as singular dots outside of the whiskers.

The plot shows the median (where the dark and light grey boxes meet), the lower and upper quartiles (dark grey and light grey boxes, respectively) and the lower and upper extremes of the purchasing data (unshaded circles between bold horizontal lines, “whiskers”). The more purchases made at a higher price creates a higher median for each year.

In Figure 2A, we see that the majority (75% of print books) cost less than \$100. However, the individual amount spent per title on the majority of print books decreased from a high of \$100 per book in 2015-2016 to a low of \$40 per book in 2017-2019. The opposite trend is demonstrated when looking at eBooks. In Figure 2B, we see that the majority of eBooks (75%) were purchased at individual prices that continued to increase over the time studied, while the percentage of spending on eBooks overall also increased (see Figure 1).

The combination of data from both Figure 1, Figure 2A and 2B tells us that since 2014, we have been spending more of our budget on eBooks while the individual price of eBooks has increased. Looking back at Figure 1, there is not a significant portion of eBooks compared to print, as you would expect by that shift in purchasing focus. Since 2014, we have been spending more of the *mhst* budget on eBooks while the individual price of eBooks has also increased, which suggests that we are prioritizing access at the expense of content.

Figure 3

Figure 3 shows the top 20 subjects (as determined by LC classifications) supported by *mhst* during five fiscal periods, from September 2014 to August 2019. There was a total of 110 distinct call number classifications, but for ease of viewing, the top 20 subjects in number of records and amount spent are shown. Each classification is also distinguished by print or eBook resource type. As seen previously in Figure 1, there is a shift in purchasing focus from print to eBooks, as funds were reallocated and collections priorities shifted. In the last two fiscal periods, there is more money spent on eBooks for less content to support U.S. History in classes E and F, with the exception of class F in 2017-2018. Since much of the *mhst* budget is now dedicated to eBook purchases and U.S. History, we should examine usage statistics for our purchased U.S. History eBooks and compare them to print usage. That analysis will clarify if users are taking advantage of the eBooks’ ease of use.

Figure 4

Figure 4 shows the top 20 subjects (as determined by LC classifications) supported by various funds, during five fiscal periods, from September 2014 to August 2019. There were a total of 110 distinct call number classifications, but for ease of viewing, the top 20

subjects in number of records are shown. The percentage indicated represents the percentage of records purchased on the fund in a particular LC class. It is clear that in the shift from sole History support provided by *mhist* to both *mhist* and *mheur*, *mhist* becomes more focused on U.S. History (Classes E & F). From 2016-2017 period on, almost half or more of the *mhist* fund is dedicated to resources with E and F classifications (66% in 2016-2017, 55% in 2017-2018 and 44% in 2018-2019).

There has been a steady decline in *mhist* support for General History with a D classification since September 2014 with 28.30% to 10.13% in 2018-2019 . There was a significant dip during 2017-2018, with only 3.8% spent on General History, but it increased again to 10.13% in 2018-2019. Overall, *mhist* supports its currently assigned disciplines, with over half of the fund being spent on General History and U.S. History from 2016-2017 onward. The remaining portion is largely spent on resources with Social Sciences, Fine Arts and Humanities classifications such as, General Literature, Industries and Labor, Women and Gender Studies, Photography and Literature on Music.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This study focused on *mhist* but future considerations could take other funds into account, both individually and collectively, as we examine UTL support for the discipline of History.

Endowments: While data from the Brodtkin Endowment (*rbrod*) and Littlefield Endowment (*rlitl*) was collected, the Emily Knauss Library Endowment for the Liberal Arts was overlooked. As our collection development plan advises the select use of endowment funds to maximize collection spending, it could be useful to delve more into endowment spending data for History related purchases. Since there are endowment limitations to types of resources purchased, how will we adjust our current spending focus on electronic resources when considering endowments?

Approval Plans: Having gathered History related approval plans, it would be interesting to examine our *ahist* acquisitions compared to titles reviewed in scholarly publications like the *American History Review* or the *Journal of American History*. Additionally, examining *ahist* fund data could reveal how *mhist* is supplementing *ahist* in the support of the History collection. Overall, with more data and time, History librarians could continue to consider how current use of firm order and approval plans could provide insight into balancing print and e-book collections to effectively support user needs and academic programs.

Other Humanities Funds: While the current study was focused on *mhist* exclusively, a deep analysis of other funds was not conducted; however, questions related to the support

of European Studies and European History presented themselves in the current dataset. For example, there has been a surprising focus on European History in the European Studies fund, with 29% of the *meuro* fund used for European History purchases in 2016-2107 and 50% in 2018-2019. However, only 20% of the European History fund, *mheur*, was used for purchases under European History LC Classifications. This is a curious finding for further analysis and could be indicative of purchasing behavior or possibly resources with multiple subject classification interpretations.

APPENDIX A: FIGURES

FIGURE 1

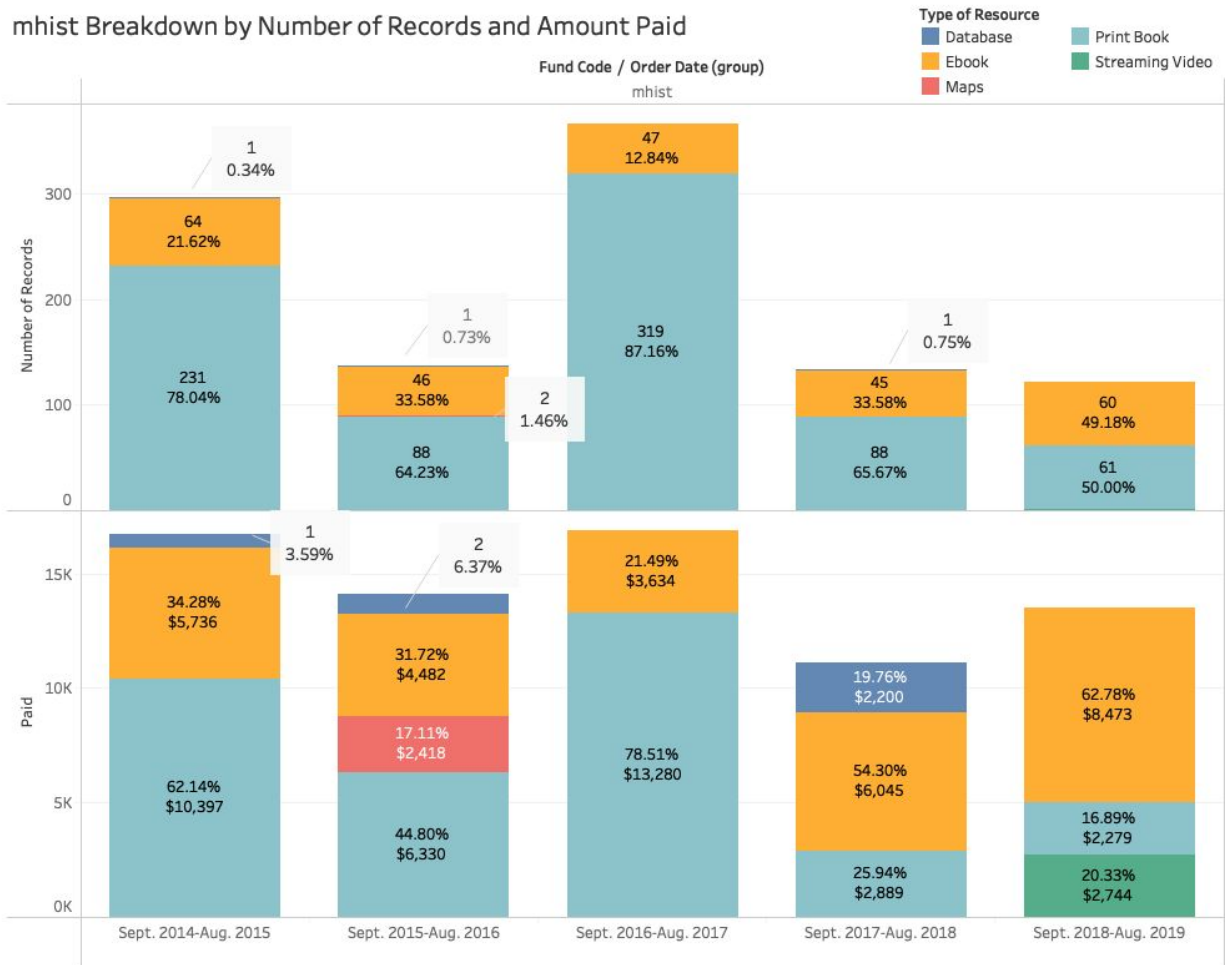


FIGURE 2A

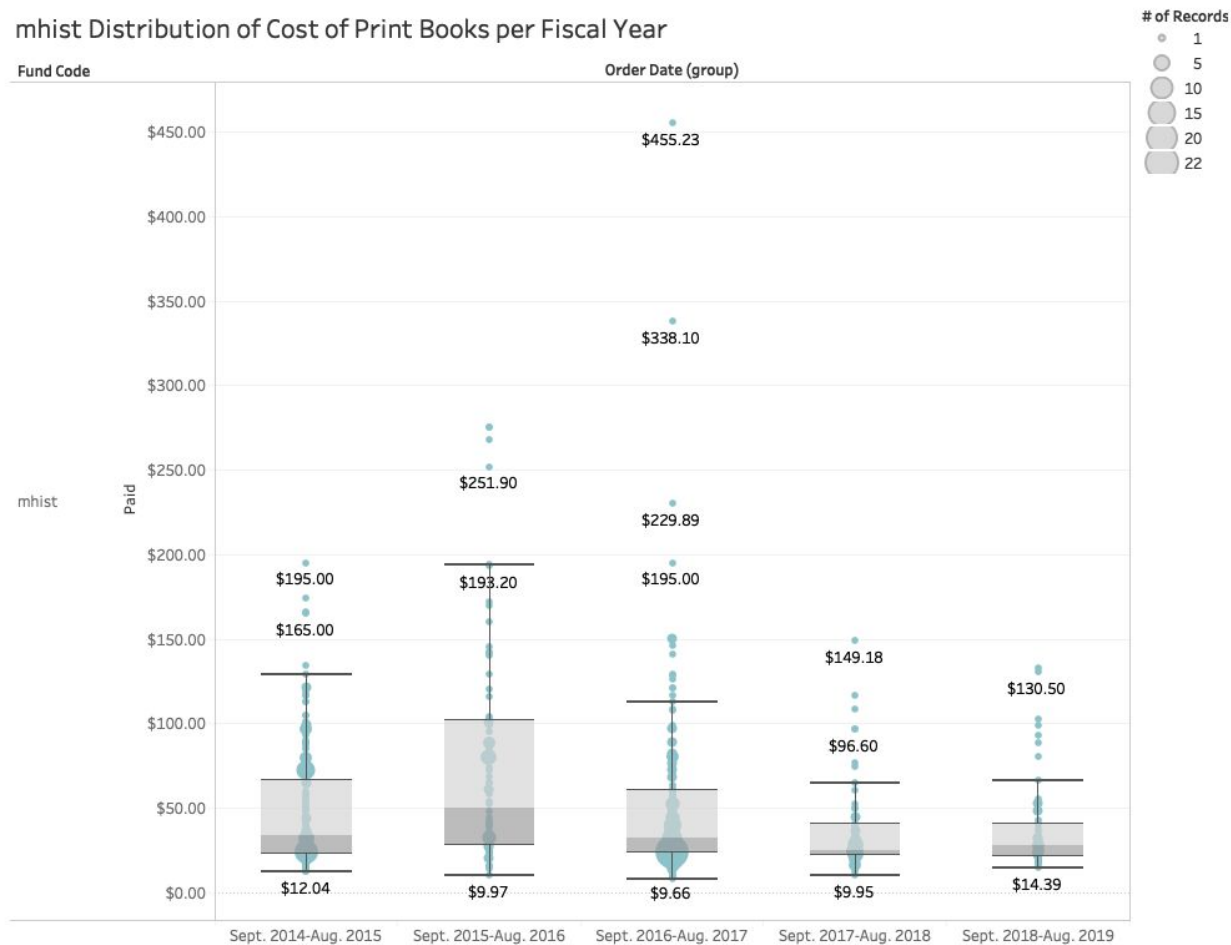


FIGURE 2B

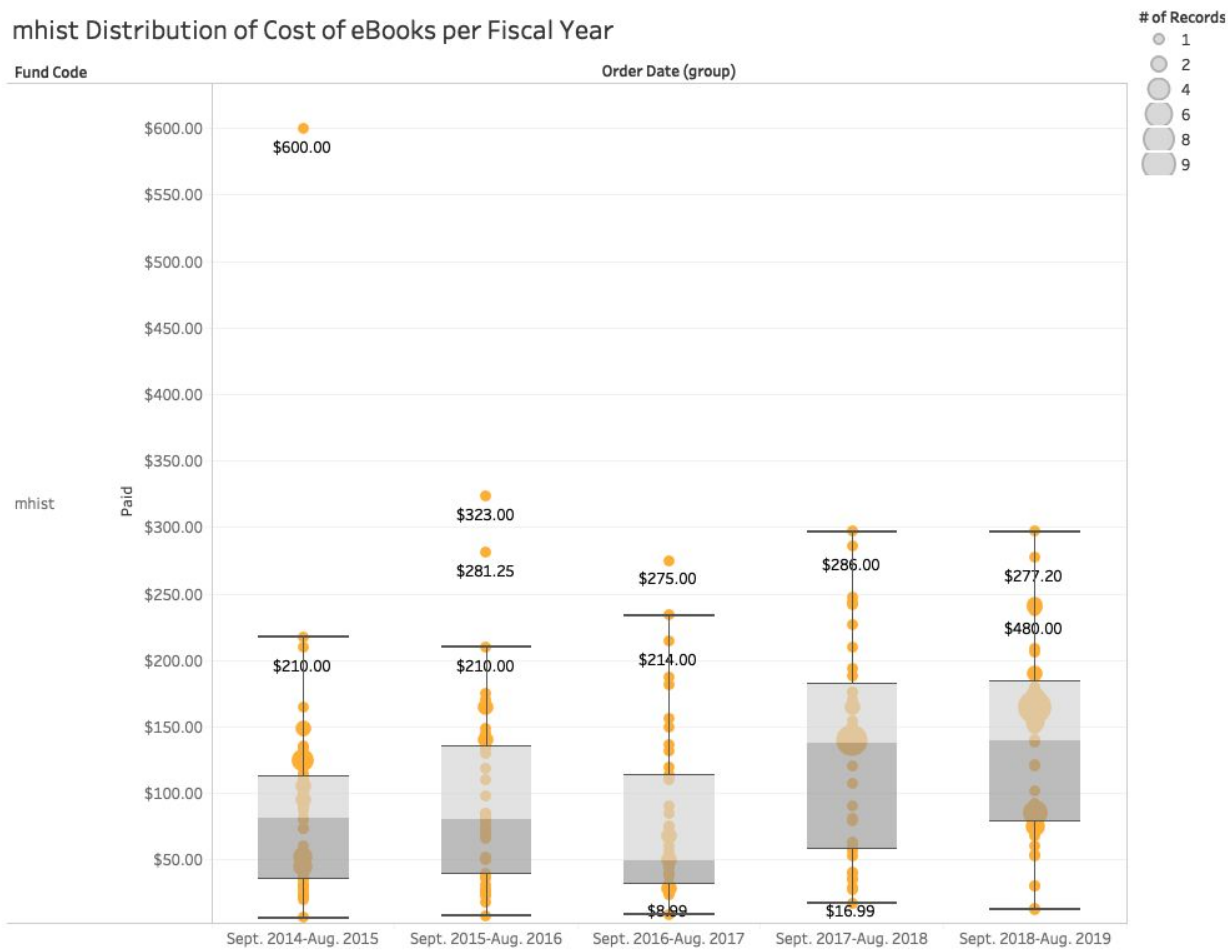


FIGURE 3

mhst funds by amount spent, number of records and LOC Classification

LOC Class	Order Date (group) / Type of Resource									
	Sept. 2014-Aug. 2015		Sept. 2015-Aug. 2016		Sept. 2016-Aug. 2017		Sept. 2017-Aug. 2018		Sept. 2018-Aug. 2019	
	EBook	Print Book	EBook	Print Book	EBook	Print Book	EBook	Print Book	EBook	Print Book
E - History of the Americas	16 \$1,060	43 \$1,695	5 \$238	13 \$509	15 \$912	123 \$4,404	8 \$954	17 \$617	12 \$2,006	12 \$407
D- History (General)	5 \$363	55 \$2,293	4 \$352	6 \$270	5 \$351	33 \$784	2 \$330	2 \$42	4 \$528	4 \$167
F - History of the Americas	1 \$112	15 \$449		4 \$237	6 \$253	47 \$1,480	4 \$306	28 \$855	7 \$345	7 \$210
DS - History of Asia	1 \$149	8 \$335	3 \$200	6 \$658	3 \$208	6 \$325	2 \$337	1 \$23	3 \$501	1 \$24
DA - History of Great Britain	6 \$625	18 \$911	1 \$170	2 \$315	2 \$323	7 \$314				
DT - History of Africa	2 \$118	11 \$775	3 \$333		20 \$141	2 \$752	2 \$106			
HD - Industries and Labor	1 \$135	2 \$133	3 \$237	1 \$80	2 \$84	2 \$45	8 \$931	1 \$24	2 \$115	1 \$38
HQ - Social Sciences		5 \$199	1 \$237	4 \$80		2 \$45	5 \$931	5 \$24	2 \$115	2 \$38
PN - Literature (General)			2 \$67	2 \$201		1 \$70	2 \$270	3 \$145	2 \$329	2 \$100
ML - Literature on Music			2 \$182			2 \$97	4 \$283	8 \$78	3 \$553	8 \$52
BX - Religion (Christianity)										
B - Philosophy (General)	2 \$90	2 \$51		1 \$80	1 \$84	7 \$471			1 \$91	1 \$192
DG - History of Italy, Malta	1 \$146			1 \$80	2 \$390			1 \$24		
DC - History of France		8 \$421		1 \$104						
TR - Photography		10 \$410	1 \$25	1 \$15	1 \$32	1 \$27		8 \$286		2 \$72
N - Visual Arts				2 \$93			1 \$120			\$99
DP - History of Spain, Portugal			1 \$166							
ND - Fine Arts, Painting						1 \$68				1 \$28
NA - Fine Arts, Architecture							2 \$52			1 \$24



FIGURE 4

various funds and the percentage breakdown of LC Classifications

LOC Class	Sept. 2014-Aug. 2015			Sept. 2015-Aug. 2016			Order Date (group) / Fund Code												Sept. 2018-Aug. 2019				
	mhst	rbrod	rltlt	mhst	rbrod	rltlt	Sept. 2016-Aug. 2017				Sept. 2017-Aug. 2018				Sept. 2018-Aug. 2019								
	meuro	mheur	mhst	rbrod	rltlt	meuro	mheur	mhst	rbrod	rltlt	meuro	mheur	mhst	rltlt	meuro	mheur	mhst	rbrod	rltlt				
E - History of the Americas	27.83%	57.14%	78.57%	26.87%	28.57%	44.44%		47.75%	50.00%	100.00%	0.28%		24.27%	100.00%	0.32%		30.38%	83.33%					
F - History of the Americas	7.55%	42.86%	17.86%	5.97%	71.43%	55.56%		18.34%	50.00%		0.56%		31.07%		0.65%		13.92%	16.67%					
D - History (General)	28.30%		1.79%	14.93%			2.08%	13.15%			3.65%	5.00%	3.88%		6.13%	11.11%	10.13%						
DS - History of Asia	4.25%			13.43%			3.13%	3.11%			2.81%	5.00%	2.91%		1.61%	16.67%	5.06%						
DA - History of Great Britain	11.32%		1.79%	4.48%				3.11%				15.00%			1.29%								
DT - History of Africa	6.13%			4.48%				7.61%			0.84%	10.00%	1.94%		1.94%	16.67%							
HD - Industries and Labor	1.42%			5.97%			4.17%	1.38%			0.84%	10.00%	8.74%		1.94%		3.80%						
HQ - Social Sciences	2.36%			7.46%			6.25%	0.69%			0.56%	5.00%	6.80%		0.32%		5.06%						
PN - Literature (General)				2.99%			27.08%	100.00%	0.35%		21.35%	10.00%	4.85%		31.94%	16.67%	7.59%						
BX - Religion (Christianity)	1.89%			1.49%			1.04%	2.77%			1.12%	10.00%			2.90%	5.56%	1.27%		100.00%				
ML - Literature on Music							2.08%				0.56%		3.88%		1.94%		13.92%						
B - Philosophy (General)	0.47%			1.49%				0.69%			0.84%	5.00%	0.97%		5.16%	5.56%							
DG - History of Italy, Malta	3.77%			1.49%			2.08%				6.74%				0.97%								
DC - History of France	4.72%			1.49%			4.17%	0.35%			5.06%	5.00%			8.39%	11.11%							
TR - Photography				2.99%			1.04%	0.35%			1.40%		7.77%		2.26%		2.53%						
N - Visual Arts				2.99%			16.67%				6.46%		0.97%		4.19%		3.80%						
DP - History of Spain, Portugal				1.49%			19.79%				7.87%	5.00%			2.26%								
ND - Fine Arts, Painting							4.17%	0.35%			5.06%				2.90%		1.27%						
NA - Fine Arts, Architecture							1.04%				3.65%	5.00%	1.94%		1.94%		1.27%						
PQ - Literature in French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish							5.21%				30.34%	10.00%			20.97%	16.67%							

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